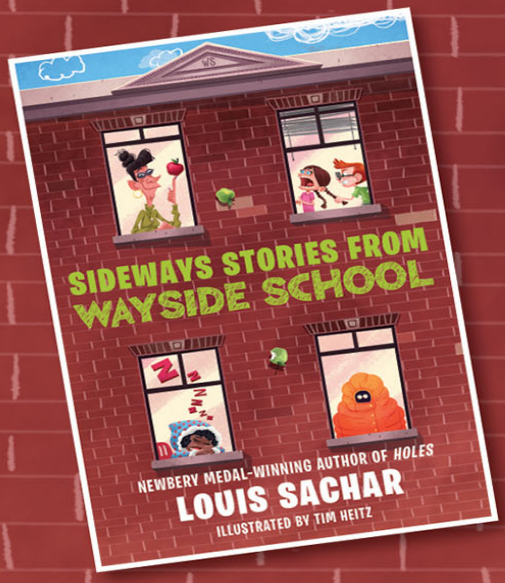
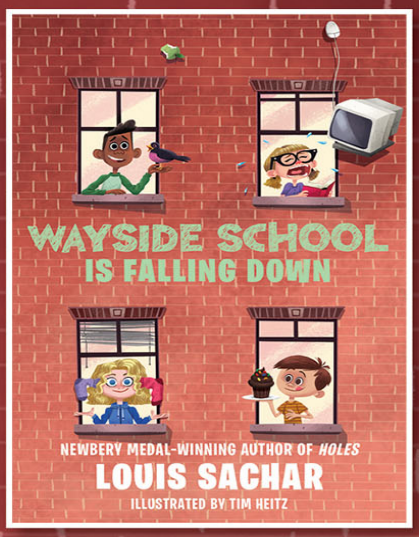
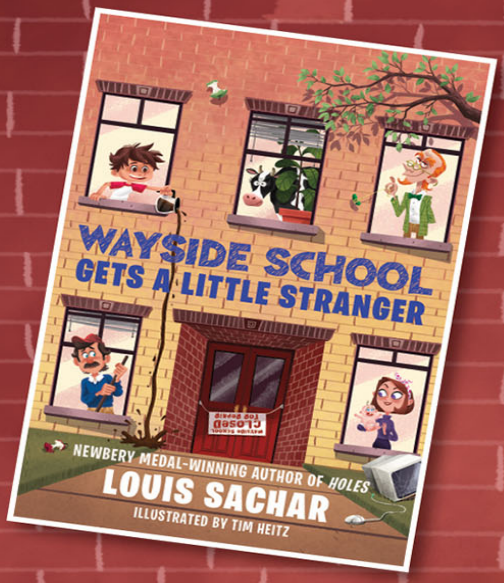
WRITTEN BY NEWBERY MEDAL-WINNING AUTHOR

LOUIS SACHAR

THE WAYSIDE SCHOOL COMPLETE COLLECTION







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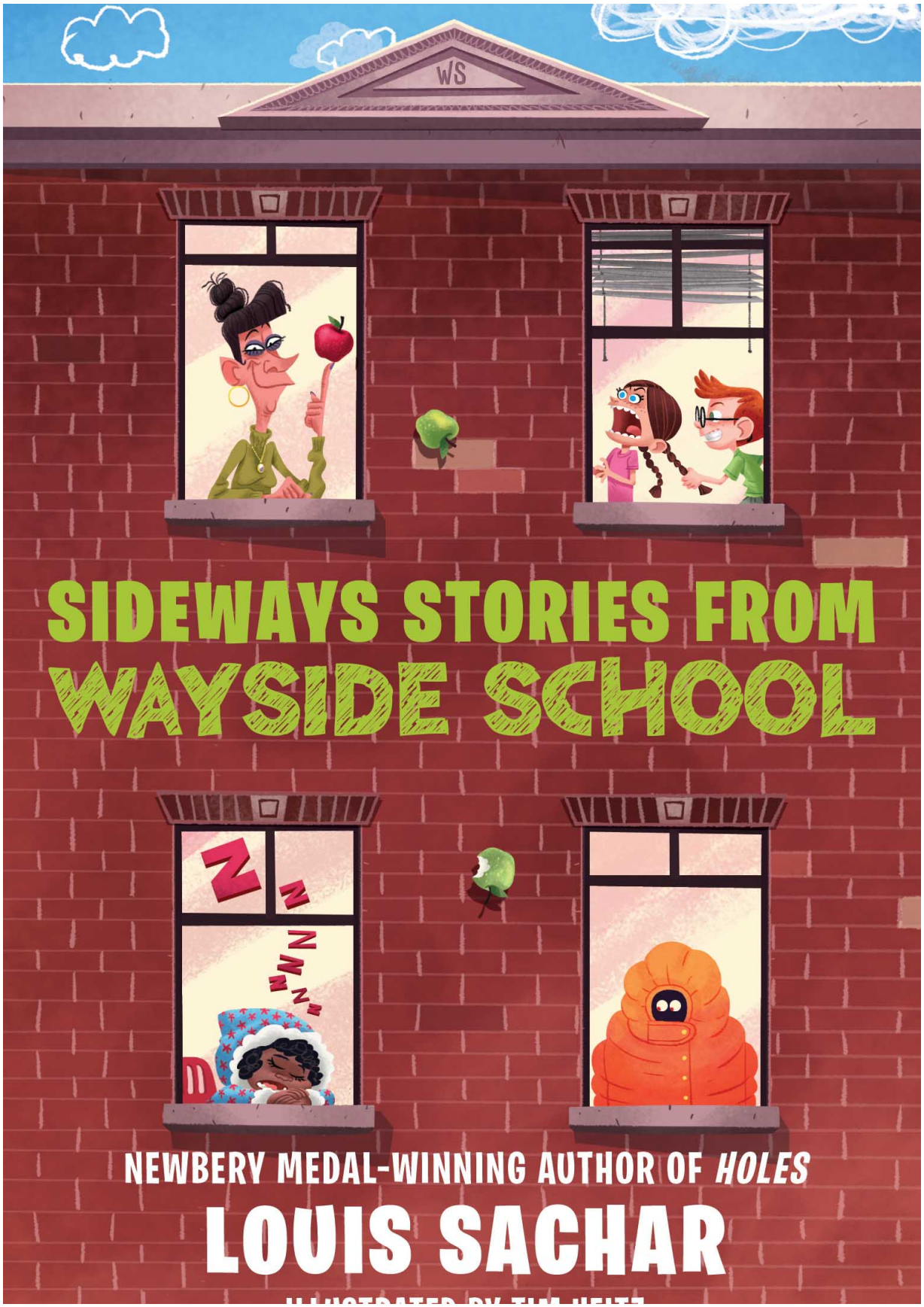
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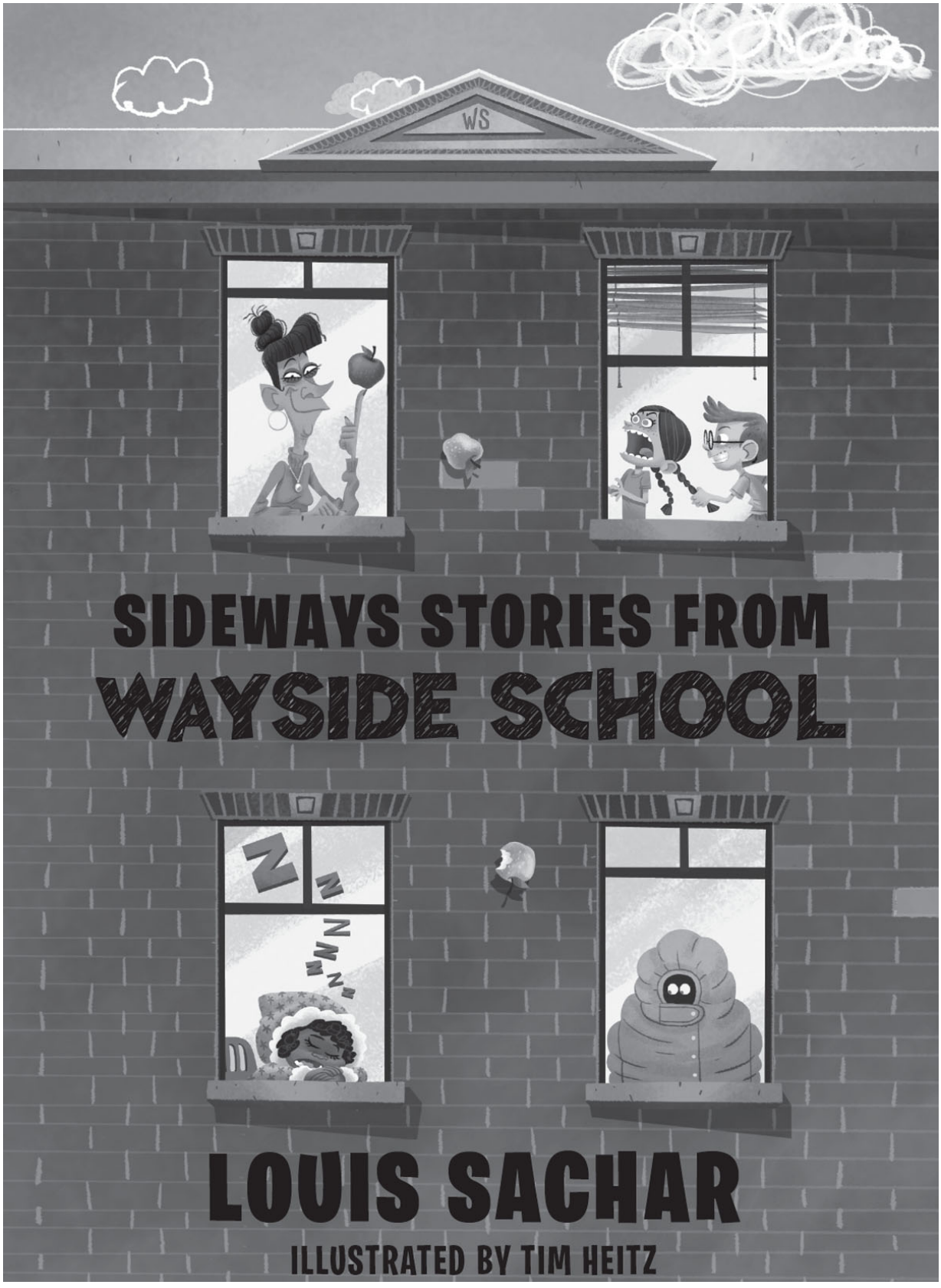
SIDEWAYS STORIES FROM
WAYSIDE SCHOOL
NEWBERY MEDAL-WINNING AUTHOR OF *HOLES*
LOUIS SACHAR

ILLUSTRATED BY TIM HEITZ



SIDEWAYS STORIES FROM WAYSIDE SCHOOL

LOUIS SACHAR

ILLUSTRATED BY TIM HEITZ

HARPER
An Imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers*

Dedication

In memory of Robert J. Sachar
and to my mother, Andy, and Jeff.

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Introduction

This book contains thirty stories about the children and teachers at Wayside School. But before we get to them, there is something you ought to know so that you don’t get confused.

Wayside School was accidentally built sideways.

It was supposed to be only one story high, with thirty classrooms all in a row. Instead it is thirty stories high, with one classroom on each story. The builder said he was very sorry.

The children at Wayside like having a sideways school. They have an extra-large playground.

The children and teachers described in this book all go to class on the top floor. So there are thirty stories from the thirtieth story of Wayside School.

It has been said that these stories are strange and silly. That is probably true. However, when I told stories about you to the children at Wayside, they thought you were strange and silly. That is probably also true.

1

Mrs. Gorf

Mrs. Gorf had a long tongue and pointed ears. She was the meanest teacher in Wayside School. She taught the class on the thirtieth story.

“If you children are bad,” she warned, “or if you answer a problem wrong, I’ll wiggle my ears, stick out my tongue, and turn you into apples!” Mrs. Gorf didn’t like children, but she loved apples.

Joe couldn’t add. He couldn’t even count. But he knew that if he answered a problem wrong, he would be turned into an apple. So he copied from John. He didn’t like to cheat, but Mrs. Gorf had never taught him how to add.

One day Mrs. Gorf caught Joe copying John’s paper.

She wiggled her ears—first her right one, then her left—stuck out her tongue, and turned Joe into an apple. Then she turned John into an apple for letting Joe cheat.

“Hey, that isn’t fair,” said Todd. “John was only trying to help a friend.”

Mrs. Gorf wiggled her ears—first her right one, then her left—stuck out her tongue, and turned Todd into an apple. “Does anybody else have an opinion?” she asked.

Nobody said a word.

Mrs. Gorf laughed and placed the three apples on her desk.

Stephen started to cry. He couldn’t help it. He was scared.

“I do not allow crying in the classroom,” said Mrs. Gorf. She wiggled her ears—first her right one, then her left—stuck out her tongue, and turned Stephen into an apple.

For the rest of the day, the children were absolutely quiet. And when they went home, they were too scared even to talk to their parents.

But Joe, John, Todd, and Stephen couldn’t go home. Mrs. Gorf just left them on her desk. They were able to talk to each other, but they didn’t have much to say.

Their parents were very worried. They didn’t know where their children were. Nobody seemed to know.

The next day Kathy was late for school. As soon as she walked in, Mrs. Gorf turned her into an apple.

Paul sneezed during class. He was turned into an apple.

Nancy said, “God bless you!” when Paul sneezed. Mrs. Gorf wiggled her ears—first her right one, then her left—stuck out her tongue, and turned Nancy into an apple.

Terrence fell out of his chair. He was turned into an apple.

Maurecia tried to run away. She was halfway to the door as Mrs. Gorf's right ear began to wiggle. When she reached the door, Mrs. Gorf's left ear wiggled. Maurecia opened the door and had one foot outside when Mrs. Gorf stuck out her tongue. Maurecia became an apple.

Mrs. Gorf picked up the apple from the floor and put it on her desk with the others. Then a funny thing happened. Mrs. Gorf turned around and fell over a piece of chalk.

The three Erics laughed. They were turned into apples.

Mrs. Gorf had a dozen apples on her desk: Joe, John, Todd, Stephen, Kathy, Paul, Nancy, Terrence, Maurecia, and the three Erics—Eric Fry, Eric Bacon, and Eric Ovens.

Louis, the yard teacher, walked into the classroom. He had missed the children at recess. He had heard that Mrs. Gorf was a mean teacher. So he came up to investigate. He saw the twelve apples on Mrs. Gorf's desk. "I must be wrong," he thought. "She must be a good teacher if so many children bring her apples." He walked back down to the playground.

The next day a dozen more children were turned into apples. Louis, the yard teacher, came back into the room. He saw twenty-four apples on Mrs. Gorf's desk. There were only three children left in the class. "She must be the best teacher in the world," he thought.

By the end of the week all of the children were apples. Mrs. Gorf was very happy. "Now I can go home," she said. "I don't have to teach anymore. I won't have to walk up thirty flights of stairs ever again."

"You're not going anywhere," shouted Todd. He jumped off the desk and bopped Mrs. Gorf on the nose. The rest of the apples followed. Mrs. Gorf fell on the floor. The apples jumped all over her.

"Stop," she shouted, "or I'll turn you into applesauce!"

But the apples didn't stop, and Mrs. Gorf could do nothing about it.

"Turn us back into children," Todd demanded.

Mrs. Gorf had no choice. She stuck out her tongue, wiggled her ears—this time her left one first, then her right—and turned the apples back into children.

"All right," said Maurecia, "let's go get Louis. He'll know what to do."

"No!" screamed Mrs. Gorf. "I'll turn you back into apples." She wiggled her ears—first her right one, then her left—and stuck out her tongue. But Jenny held up a mirror, and Mrs. Gorf turned herself into an apple.

The children didn’t know what to do. They didn’t have a teacher. Even though Mrs. Gorf was mean, they didn’t think it was right to leave her as an apple. But none of them knew how to wiggle their ears.

Louis, the yard teacher, walked in. “Where’s Mrs. Gorf?” he asked.

Nobody said a word.

“Boy, am I hungry,” said Louis. “I don’t think Mrs. Gorf would mind if I ate this apple. After all, she always has so many.”

He picked up the apple, which was really Mrs. Gorf, shined it up on his shirt, and ate it.

2

Mrs. Jewls

Mrs. Jewls had a terribly nice face. She stood at the bottom of Wayside School and looked up. She was supposed to teach the class on the thirtieth

story.

The children on the thirtieth story were scared. They had never told anybody what had happened to Mrs. Gorf. They hadn't had a teacher for three days. They were afraid of what their new teacher would be like. They had heard she'd be a terribly nice teacher. They had never had a nice teacher. They were terribly afraid of nice teachers.

Mrs. Jewls walked up the winding, creaking staircase to the thirtieth story. She was also afraid. She was afraid of the children. She had heard that they would be horribly cute children. She had never taught cute children. She was horribly afraid of cute children.

She opened the door to the classroom. She was terribly nice. The children could tell just by looking at her.

Mrs. Jewls looked at the children. They were horribly cute. In fact, they were much too cute to be children.

"I don't believe it," said Mrs. Jewls. "It's a room full of monkeys!"

The children looked at each other. They didn't see any monkeys.

"This is ridiculous," said Mrs. Jewls, "just ridiculous. I walked all the way up thirty flights of stairs for nothing but a class of monkeys. What do they think I am? I'm a teacher, not a zookeeper!"

The children looked at her. They didn't know what to say. Todd scratched his head.

"Oh, I'm sorry," said Mrs. Jewls. "Please don't get me wrong. I have nothing against monkeys. It is just that I was expecting children. I like monkeys. I really do. Why, I'm sure we can play all kinds of monkey games."

"What are you talking about?" asked Todd.

Mrs. Jewls nearly fell off her chair. "Well, what do you know, a talking monkey. Tomorrow I'll bring you a banana."

"My name is Todd," said Todd.

The children were flabbergasted. They all raised their hands.

"I'm sorry," said Mrs. Jewls, "but I don't have enough bananas for all of you. I didn't expect this. Next week I'll bring in a whole bushel."

"I don't want a banana," said Calvin. "I'm not a monkey."

"Would you like a peanut?" asked Mrs. Jewls. "I think I might have a bag of peanuts in my purse. Wait a second. Yes, here it is."

"Thanks," said Calvin. Calvin liked peanuts.

Allison stood up. “I’m not a monkey,” she said. “I’m a girl. My name is Allison. And so is everybody else.”

Mrs. Jewls was shocked. “Do you mean to tell me that every monkey in here is named Allison?”

“No,” said Jenny. “She means we are all children. My name is Jenny.”

“No,” said Mrs. Jewls. “You’re much too cute to be children.”

Jason raised his hand.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Jewls, “the chimpanzee in the red shirt.”

“My name is Jason,” said Jason, “and I’m not a chimpanzee.”

“You’re too small to be a gorilla,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“I’m a boy,” said Jason.

“You’re not a monkey?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“No,” said Jason.

“And the rest of the class, they’re not monkeys, either?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“No,” said Allison. “That is what we’ve been trying to tell you.”

“Are you sure?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“We’d know if we were monkeys, wouldn’t we?” asked Calvin.

“I don’t know,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Do monkeys know that they are monkeys?”

“I don’t know,” said Allison. “I’m not a monkey.”

“No, I suppose you’re not,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Okay, in that case, we have a lot of work to do—reading, writing, subtraction, addition, spelling. Everybody take out a piece of paper. We will have a test now.”

Jason tapped Todd on the shoulder. He said, “Do you want to know something? I liked it better when she thought we were monkeys.”

“I know,” said Todd. “I guess now it means she won’t bring me a banana.”

“There will be no talking in class,” said Mrs. Jewls. She wrote Todd’s name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

3

Joe

Joe had curly hair. But he didn’t know how much hair he had. He couldn’t count that high. In fact, he couldn’t count at all.

When all of the other children went to recess, Mrs. Jewls told Joe to wait inside. “Joe,” she said. “How much hair do you have?”

Joe shrugged his shoulders. “A lot,” he answered.

“But how much, Joe?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Enough to cover my head,” Joe answered.

“Joe, you are going to have to learn how to count,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“But, Mrs. Jewls, I already know how to count,” said Joe. “Let me go to recess.”

“First count to ten,” said Mrs. Jewls.

Joe counted to ten: “six, eight, twelve, one, five, two, seven, eleven, three, ten.”

“No, Joe, that is wrong,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“No, it isn’t,” said Joe. “I counted until I got to ten.”

“But you were wrong,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I’ll prove it to you.” She put five pencils on his desk. “How many pencils do we have here, Joe?”

Joe counted the pencils. “Four, six, one, nine, five. There are five pencils, Mrs. Jewls.”

“That’s wrong,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“How many pencils are there?” Joe asked.

“Five,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“That’s what I said,” said Joe. “May I go to recess now?”

“No,” said Mrs. Jewls. “You got the right answer, but you counted the wrong way. You were just lucky.” She set eight potatoes on his desk. “How many potatoes, Joe?”

Joe counted the potatoes. “Seven, five, three, one, two, four, six, eight. There are eight potatoes, Mrs. Jewls.”

“No, there are eight,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“But that’s what I said,” said Joe. “May I go to recess now?”

“No, you got the right answer, but you counted the wrong way again.” She put three books on his desk. “Count the books, Joe.”

Joe counted the books. “A thousand, a million, three. Three, Mrs. Jewls.”

“Correct,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“May I go to recess now?” Joe asked.

“No,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“May I have a potato?” asked Joe.

“No. Listen to me. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Now you say it.”

“One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten,” said Joe.

“Very good!” said Mrs. Jewls. She put six erasers on his desk. “Now count the erasers, Joe, just the way I showed you.”

Joe counted the erasers. “One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. There are ten, Mrs. Jewls.”

“No,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Didn’t I count right?” asked Joe.

“Yes, you counted right, but you got the wrong answer,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“This doesn’t make any sense,” said Joe. “When I count the wrong way I get the right answer, and when I count right I get the wrong answer.”

Mrs. Jewls hit her head against the wall five times. “How many times did I hit my head against the wall?” she asked.

“One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. You hit your head against the wall ten times,” said Joe.

“No,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Four, six, one, nine, five. You hit your head five times,” said Joe.

Mrs. Jewls shook her head no and said, “Yes, that is right.”

The bell rang, and all the other children came back from recess. The fresh air had made them very excited, and they were laughing and shouting.

“Oh, darn,” said Joe. “Now I missed recess.”

“Hey, Joe, where were you?” asked John. “You missed a great game of kickball.”

“I kicked a home run,” said Todd.

“What was wrong with you, Joe?” asked Joy.

“Nothing,” said Joe. “Mrs. Jewls was just trying to teach me how to count.”

Joy laughed. “You mean you don’t know how to count!”

“Counting is easy,” said Maurecia.

“Now, now,” said Mrs. Jewls. “What’s easy for you may not be easy for Joe, and what’s easy for Joe may not be easy for you.”

“Nothing’s easy for Joe,” said Maurecia. “He’s stupid.”

“I can beat you up,” said Joe.

“Try it,” said Maurecia.

“That will be enough of that,” said Mrs. Jewls. She wrote Maurecia’s name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

Joe put his head on his desk between the eight potatoes and the six erasers.

“Don’t feel bad, Joe,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“I just don’t get it,” said Joe. “I’ll never learn how to count.”

“Sure you will, Joe,” said Mrs. Jewls. “One day it will just come to you. You’ll wake up one morning and suddenly be able to count.”

Joe asked, “If all I have to do is wake up, what am I going to school for?”

“School just speeds things up,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Without school it might take another seventy years before you wake up and are able to count.”

“By that time I may have no hair left on top of my head to count,” said Joe.

“Exactly,” said Mrs. Jewls. “That is why you go to school.”

When Joe woke up the next day, he knew how to count. He had fifty-five thousand and six hairs on his head. They were all curly.

4

Sharie

Sharie had long eyelashes. She weighed only forty-nine pounds. She always wore a big red and blue overcoat with a hood. The overcoat weighed thirty-five pounds. The red part weighed fifteen pounds, the blue part weighed fifteen pounds, and the hood weighed five pounds. Her eyelashes weighed a pound and a half.

She sat next to the window in Mrs. Jewls's class. She spent a lot of time just staring out the window. Mrs. Jewls didn't mind. Mrs. Jewls said that a lot of people learn best when they stare out a window.

Sharie often fell asleep in class. Mrs. Jewls didn't mind that, either. She said that a lot of people do their best learning when they are asleep.

Sharie spent all of her time either looking out the window or sleeping. Mrs. Jewls thought she was the best student in the class.

One afternoon it was very hot. All of the windows were open, yet Sharie still wore her red and blue overcoat. The heat made her very tired. Mrs. Jewls was teaching arithmetic. Sharie pulled the hood up over her face, buried herself in the coat, and went to sleep.

"Mrs. Jewls," said Kathy, "Sharie is asleep."

"That's good," said Mrs. Jewls. "She must be learning something."

Mrs. Jewls continued with the lesson.

Sharie began to snore.

"Mrs. Jewls, Sharie is snoring," said Kathy.

"Yes, I can hear her," said Mrs. Jewls. "She must be learning an awful lot today. I wish the rest of you could be like her."

Sharie began to toss and turn. She flopped over on top of her desk, and then rolled over on top of Kathy's desk. Then she rolled back the other way. Kathy screamed. Sharie rolled out the window. She was still sound asleep.

As you know, Mrs. Jewls's class was on the thirtieth story of Wayside School. So Sharie had a long way to go.

After she had fallen ten stories, Sharie woke up. She looked around. She was confused. She wasn't in Mrs. Jewls's class, and she wasn't at home in bed. She couldn't figure out where she was. She yawned, pulled the hood back over her eyes, and went back to sleep. By that time she had fallen another ten stories.

Wayside School had an exceptionally large playground. Louis, the yard teacher, was way over on the other side of it when he happened to see Sharie fall out the window. He ducked under the volleyball net, hurtled

past the kickball field, hopped over the hopscotch court, climbed through the monkey bars, sped across the grass, and caught Sharie just before she hit the ground.

The people in Mrs. Jewls's class cheered.

Sharie woke up in Louis's arms.

"Darn it, Louis," she said. "What did you go and wake me up for?"

"I'm sorry, Sharie," said Louis.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry," Sharie repeated. "Is that all you can say? I was having a wonderful dream until you woke me up. You're always bothering me, Louis. I can't stand it." She laughed and hugged him around the neck.

Louis carried her back up thirty flights of stairs to Mrs. Jewls's room.

That evening, when Sharie went to bed, she was unable to fall asleep. She just wasn't tired.

5

Todd

All of the children in Mrs. Jewls's class, except Todd, were talking and carrying on. Todd was thinking. Todd always thought before he spoke. When he got an idea, his eyes lit up.

Todd finished thinking and began to speak. But before he said two words, Mrs. Jewls called him.

“Todd,” she said, “you know better than to talk in class. You must learn to work quietly, like the other children.” She wrote his name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

Todd looked around in amazement. All of the other children, who had been talking and screaming and fighting only seconds earlier, were quietly working in their workbooks. Todd scratched his head.

A child was given three chances in Mrs. Jewls’s class. The first time he did something wrong, Mrs. Jewls wrote his name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE. The second time he did something wrong, she put a check next to his name. And the third time he did something wrong, she circled his name.

Todd reached into his desk and pulled out his workbook. He had only just started on it when he felt someone tap him on the shoulder. It was Joy.

“What page are you on?” Joy asked.

“Page four,” Todd whispered.

“I’m on page eleven,” said Joy.

Todd didn’t say anything. He didn’t want to get into trouble. He just went back to work.

Five minutes later, Joy tapped him again. Todd ignored her. So Joy poked him in the back with her pencil. Todd pretended he didn’t notice. Joy got up from her seat and sharpened her pencil. She came back and poked it in Todd’s back. “What page are you on?” she asked.

“Page five,” Todd answered.

“Boy, are you dumb,” said Joy, “I’m on page twenty-nine.”

“It isn’t a race,” Todd whispered.

Five minutes later Joy pulled Todd’s hair and didn’t let go until he turned around. “What page are you on?” she demanded.

“Page six,” Todd answered as quietly as he could.

“I’M ON PAGE TWO HUNDRED!” Joy shouted.

Todd was very angry. “Will you please let me do my work and stop bothering me!”

Mrs. Jewls heard him. “Todd, what did I say about talking in class?”

Todd scratched his head.

Mrs. Jewls put a check next to Todd’s name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

Todd really tried to be good. He knew that if he talked one more time, Mrs. Jewls would circle his name. Then he’d have to go home early, at

twelve o’clock, on the kindergarten bus, just as he had the day before and the day before that. In fact, there hadn’t been a day since Mrs. Jewls took over the class that she didn’t send Todd home early. She said she did it for his own good. The other children went home at two o’clock.

Todd wasn’t really bad. He just always got caught. He really wanted to stay past twelve o’clock. He wanted to find out what the class did from twelve to two. But it didn’t look as though this was going to be his day. It was only ten-thirty, and he already had two strikes against him. He sealed his lips and went back to work.

There was a knock on the door. Mrs. Jewls opened it. Two men stepped in wearing masks and holding guns. “Give us all your money!” they demanded.

“All I have is a nickel,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“I have a dime,” said Maurecia.

“I have thirteen cents,” said Leslie.

“I have four cents,” said Dameon.

“What kind of bank is this?” asked one of the robbers.

“It’s not a bank, it’s a school,” said Todd. “Can’t you read?”

“No,” said the robbers.

“Neither can I,” said Todd.

“Do you mean we walked all the way up thirty flights of stairs for nothing?” asked the robber. “Don’t you have anything valuable?”

Todd’s eyes lit up. “We sure do,” he said. “We have knowledge.” He grabbed Joy’s workbook and gave it to the robbers. “Knowledge is much more valuable than money.”

“Thanks, kid,” said one of the robbers.

“Maybe I’ll give up being a criminal and become a scientist,” said the other.

They left the room without hurting anybody.

“Now I don’t have a workbook,” complained Joy.

Mrs. Jewls gave her a new one. Joy had to start all the way back at the beginning.

“Hey, Joy, what page are you on?” asked Todd.

“Page one,” Joy sighed.

“I’m on page eight,” laughed Todd triumphantly.

Mrs. Jewls heard him. She circled his name. Todd had three strikes against him. At twelve o’clock he left the room to go home early on the

kindergarten bus.

But this time when he left, he was like a star baseball player leaving the field. All the children stood up, clapped their hands, and whistled.

Todd scratched his head.

6

Bebe

Bebe was a girl with short brown hair, a little beebee nose, totally tiny toes, and big brown eyes. Her full name was Bebe Gunn. She was the fastest draw in Mrs. Jewls's class.

She could draw a cat in less than forty-five seconds, a dog in less than thirty, and a flower in less than eight seconds.

But, of course, Bebe never drew just one dog, or one cat, or one flower. Art was from twelve-thirty to one-thirty. Why, in that time, she could draw fifty cats, a hundred flowers, twenty dogs, and several eggs or watermelons. It took her the same amount of time to draw a watermelon as an egg.

Calvin sat next to Bebe. He didn't think he was very good at art. Why, it took him the whole period just to draw one airplane. So instead, he just helped Bebe. He was Bebe's assistant. As soon as Bebe would finish one masterpiece, Calvin would take it from her and set down a clean sheet of paper. Whenever her crayon ran low, Calvin was ready with a new crayon. That way Bebe didn't have to waste any time. And in return, Bebe would draw five or six airplanes for Calvin.

It was twelve-thirty, time for art. Bebe was ready. On her desk was a sheet of yellow construction paper. In her hand was a green crayon.

Calvin was ready. He held a stack of paper and a box of crayons.

"Ready, Bebe," said Calvin.

"Ready, Calvin," said Bebe.

"Okay," said Mrs. Jewls, "time for art."

She had hardly finished her sentence when Bebe had already drawn a picture of a leaf.

Calvin took it from her and put another piece of paper down.

"Red," called Bebe.

Calvin handed Bebe a red crayon.

"Blue," called Bebe.

He gave her a blue crayon.

They were quite a pair. Their teamwork was remarkable. Bebe drew pictures as fast as Calvin could pick up the old paper and set down the new —a fish, an apple, three cherries, bing, bing, bing.

At one-thirty Mrs. Jewls announced, "Okay, class, art is over."

Bebe dropped her crayon and fell over on her desk. Calvin sighed and leaned back in his chair. He could hardly move. They had broken their old

record. Bebe had drawn three hundred and seventy-eight pictures. They lay in a pile on Calvin's desk.

Mrs. Jewls walked by. "Calvin, did you draw all these pictures?"

Calvin laughed. "No, I can't draw. Bebe drew them all."

"Well, then, what did you draw?" asked Mrs. Jewls.

"I didn't draw anything," said Calvin.

"Why not? Don't you like art?" asked Mrs. Jewls.

"I love art," said Calvin. "That's why I didn't draw anything."

Mrs. Jewls did not understand.

"It would have taken me the whole period just to draw one picture," said Calvin. "And Bebe would only have been able to draw a hundred pictures. But with the two of us working together, she was able to draw three hundred and seventy-eight pictures! That's a lot more art."

Bebe and Calvin shook hands.

"No," said Mrs. Jewls. "That isn't how you measure art. It isn't how many pictures you have, but how good the pictures are. Why, a person could spend his whole life just drawing one picture of a cat. In that time I'm sure Bebe could draw a million cats."

"Two million," said Bebe.

Mrs. Jewls continued. "But if that one picture is better than each of Bebe's two million, then that person has produced more art than Bebe."

Bebe looked as if she was going to cry. She picked up all the pictures from Calvin's desk and threw them in the garbage. Then she ran from the room.

"I thought her pictures were good," said Calvin. He reached into the garbage pail and took out a crumpled-up picture of an airplane.

Bebe walked outside into the playground.

Louis, the yard teacher, spotted her. "Where are you going?" he asked.

"I'm going home to draw a picture of a cat," said Bebe.

"Will you bring it to school and show it to me tomorrow?" Louis asked.

"Tomorrow!" laughed Bebe. "By tomorrow I doubt if I'll even be finished with one whisker."

7

Calvin

Calvin had a big, round face.

"Calvin," said Mrs. Jewls, "I want you to take this note to Miss Zarves for me."

"Miss Zarves?" asked Calvin.

"Yes, Miss Zarves," said Mrs. Jewls. "You know where she is, don't you?"

"Yes," said Calvin. "She's on the nineteenth story."

"That's right, Calvin," said Mrs. Jewls. "Take it to her."

Calvin didn't move.

"Well, what are you waiting for?" asked Mrs. Jewls.

"She's on the nineteenth story," said Calvin.

"Yes, we have already established that fact," said Mrs. Jewls.

"The nineteenth story," Calvin repeated.

"Yes, Calvin, the nineteenth story," said Mrs. Jewls. "Now take it to her before I lose my patience."

"But, Mrs. Jewls," said Calvin.

"Now, Calvin!" said Mrs. Jewls. "Unless you would rather go home on the kindergarten bus."

"Yes, ma'am," said Calvin. Slowly he walked out the door.

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Terrence, "take it to the nineteenth story."

"Give it to Miss Zarves," hooted Myron.

"Have fun on the nineteenth story," called Jason.

Calvin stood outside the door to the classroom. He didn't know where to go.

As you know, when the builder built Wayside School, he accidentally built it sideways. But he also forgot to build the nineteenth story. He built the eighteenth and the twentieth, but no nineteenth. He said he was very sorry.

There was also no Miss Zarves. Miss Zarves taught the class on the nineteenth story. Since there was no nineteenth story, there was no Miss Zarves.

And besides that, as if Calvin didn't have enough problems, there was no note. Mrs. Jewls had never given Calvin the note.

"Boy, this is just great," thought Calvin. "Just great! I'm supposed to take a note that I don't have to a teacher who doesn't exist, and who teaches on a story that was never built."

He didn’t know what to do. He walked down to the eighteenth story, then back up to the twentieth, then back down to the eighteenth, and back up again to the twentieth. There was no nineteenth story. There never was a nineteenth story. And there never will be a nineteenth story.

Calvin walked down to the administration office. He decided to put the note in Miss Zarves’s mailbox. But there wasn’t one of those, either. That didn’t bother Calvin too much, however, since he didn’t have a note.

He looked out the window and saw Louis, the yard teacher, shooting baskets. “Louis will know what to do,” he thought. Calvin went outside.

“Hey, Louis,” Calvin called.

“Hi, Calvin,” said Louis. He tossed him the basketball. Calvin dribbled up and took a shot. He missed. Louis tipped it in.

“Do you want to play a game?” Louis asked.

“I don’t have time,” said Calvin. “I have to deliver a note to Miss Zarves up on the nineteenth story.”

“Then what are you doing all the way down here?” Louis asked.

“There is no nineteenth story,” said Calvin.

“Then where is Miss Zarves?” asked Louis.

“There is no Miss Zarves,” said Calvin.

“What are you going to do with the note?” asked Louis.

“There is no note,” said Calvin.

“I understand,” said Louis.

“That’s good,” said Calvin, “because I sure don’t.”

“It’s very simple,” said Louis. “You are not supposed to take no notes to no teachers. You already haven’t done it.”

Calvin still didn’t understand. “I’ll just have to tell Mrs. Jewls that I couldn’t deliver the note,” he said.

“That’s good,” said Louis. “The truth is always best. Besides, I don’t think I understand what I said, either.” Calvin walked back up the thirty flights of stairs to Mrs. Jewls’s class.

“Thank you very much, Calvin,” said Mrs. Jewls.

Calvin said, “But I—”

Mrs. Jewls interrupted him. “That was a very important note, and I’m glad I was able to count on you.”

“Yes, but you see—” said Calvin.

“You delivered the note to Miss Zarves on the nineteenth story?” asked Jason. “How did you do it?”

“What do you mean, how did he do it?” asked Mrs. Jewls. “He gave Miss Zarves the note. Some people, Jason, are responsible.”

“But you see, Mrs. Jewls—” said Calvin.

“The note was very important,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I told Miss Zarves not to meet me for lunch.”

“Don’t worry,” said Calvin. “She won’t.”

“Good,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I have a coffee can full of Tootsie Roll pops on my desk. You may help yourself to one, for being such a good messenger.”

“Thanks,” said Calvin, “but really, it was nothing.”

8

Myron

Myron had big ears. He was elected class president. The children in Mrs. Jewls's class expected him to be a good president. Other presidents were good speakers. Myron was even better. He was a good listener.

But he had a problem. He didn't know what a class president was supposed to do. So he asked.

"What am I supposed to do?"

"It's a difficult job," said Mrs. Jewls. "But you can do it. You must turn the lights on every morning and turn them off at the end of the day."

"What?" asked Myron.

"As a class president you must learn to listen," said Mrs. Jewls. "I'll repeat myself only one more time. You must turn the lights on every morning—"

"I heard you the first time," said Myron. "It just doesn't sound like much of a job."

"It certainly is!" said Mrs. Jewls. "Without light I can't teach, and the children can't learn. Only you can give us that light. I think it is a very important job."

"I guess so," said Myron. He wasn't convinced.

"Here, let me show you how to work a light switch," said Mrs. Jewls.

"I already know how," said Myron. "I've been turning lights on and off all my life."

"Very good!" said Mrs. Jewls. "You'll make a fine president."

Myron wanted to be the best president ever. But it was such an easy job, he thought, that anybody could do it. When school let out that day, Myron stayed behind. He turned out the lights by flicking the switch down.

"Excellent!" said Mrs. Jewls.

On his way home, Myron heard a horrible noise. First there was a loud screeching, then a sharp squeal, a roaring engine, and then the very faint sound of a girl crying.

Myron ran to see what had happened.

Dana was bent over in the middle of the road.

"What's the matter?" asked Myron.

"My dog, Pugsy, was hit by a car," Dana cried.

"Who did it?" asked Myron.

"I don't know!" Dana sobbed. "They sped away."

"Well, that's not important," said Myron. "We've got to try to save Pugsy."

Pugsy lay unconscious in the street. Myron carefully picked her up. He carried her two miles to the vet. Dana cried at his side.

“Don’t worry, Dana,” said Myron. “She’ll be all right.” But he wasn’t really so sure.

He gave Pugsy to the vet, walked Dana home, then walked home himself.

Dana was so upset that she forgot to thank him. Myron didn’t mind. He thought that was what being class president was all about.

The next morning, before he went to school, Myron went to Dana’s house. Pugsy was there. She seemed all right.

Dana petted her. Pugsy licked her face.

“See, Myron, she’s all right,” said Dana. “The vet said that you brought her in just in time.”

“Hi, Pugsy,” said Myron. He petted her.

Pugsy bit his hand.

“I guess she doesn’t know you,” said Dana. “She was unconscious yesterday when you saved her life.”

Dana’s mother put some medicine and a Band-Aid on Myron’s hand. Then she drove the children to school.

They were late. They ran up the stairs to Mrs. Jewls’s class. The room was completely dark.

“It’s about time you got here, Myron,” said Mrs. Jewls. “We have no lights.”

“Why didn’t somebody else just turn them on?” asked Myron.

“Because you’re class president,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Show Stephen how to work the lights. From now on he will be class president.”

Myron showed Stephen how to turn on the lights. He flicked the switch up.

At the end of the day, Myron showed Stephen how to turn the lights off. He flicked the switch down.

After a week, Stephen finally caught on. He made a good president. The lights were on every morning.

Myron, who was president for only a day, was the best president in the history of Wayside School. It was just that nobody knew it.

9

Maurecia

Maurecia liked ice cream. She was sweet and pretty and could beat up any boy in Mrs. Jewls's class. Everybody liked Maurecia—except Kathy, but then she didn't like anybody. Maurecia only liked ice cream.

Every day Maurecia brought an ice cream cone to school and kept it in her desk until lunch time. At first she brought chocolate ice cream every

day. But she soon tired of chocolate ice cream. So she started bringing vanilla. But she got tired of vanilla, too. Then she got tired of strawberry, fudge ripple, butter pecan, pistachio, and burgundy cherry, in that order. And then a terrible thing happened. Maurecia got tired of ice cream. By that time her desk was a mess, and everything in it was sticky.

Everybody liked Maurecia. But Maurecia didn't like anything.

Mrs. Jewls hated to see Maurecia unhappy.

"I don't understand it, Mrs. Jewls," cried Maurecia. "There just aren't any good flavors anymore."

So Mrs. Jewls worked all night. The next day she brought in a new flavor of ice cream for Maurecia. It was Maurecia-flavored ice cream. "Everybody will like it," thought Mrs. Jewls, "because everybody likes Maurecia."

"Here you are, Maurecia," said Mrs. Jewls, "Maurecia-flavored ice cream."

Everybody gathered around as Maurecia tasted it. They hoped she'd like it.

Maurecia took a lick.

"Well?" said Mrs. Jewls.

Maurecia took another lick.

"Well?" asked the class.

"This ice cream has no taste," said Maurecia. "It doesn't taste bad, but it doesn't taste good. It doesn't taste like anything at all!"

Mrs. Jewls was heartbroken.

"Here, let me try it," said Todd. He tasted it. "You're crazy, Maurecia!" he said. "This is the best-tasting ice cream I've ever eaten! Try some, Deedee."

"Ummmmmmmm, it's delicious," said Deedee. "It's so sweet and creamy." She passed it around the room.

"Oh, it is so good," said Leslie.

"I think it tastes terrible," said Kathy.

"I don't understand it," said Maurecia. "I don't taste a thing."

Mrs. Jewls slapped herself in the face. "Oh, I've made a big mistake, Maurecia. Of course you can't taste anything. It's Maurecia-flavored ice cream. It's the same taste you always taste when you're not tasting anything at all."

So the next day Mrs. Jewls brought in Joe-flavored ice cream. Maurecia liked it. So did everybody else. Joe thought it had no taste.

Everybody liked Maurecia. Maurecia only liked Joe.

The following day Mrs. Jewls brought in Ron-flavored ice cream. Ron thought it had no taste, but everybody else loved it.

Everybody liked Maurecia. Maurecia only liked Joe and Ron.

By the end of the month, Mrs. Jewls had brought in twenty-seven new flavors of ice cream, one for each member of the class.

Everybody liked Maurecia, and Maurecia liked everybody. They all tasted so good. All except Kathy, that is. Kathy-flavored ice cream tasted a little bit like old bologna.

Everyone still agreed that Maurecia-flavored ice cream was the best, except Maurecia. She liked Todd ice cream the best.

This turned out to be a problem. Every once in a while Maurecia would try to take a bite out of Todd’s arm in order to get that very special flavor.

10

Paul

Paul had the best seat in Mrs. Jewls's class. He sat in the back of the room. It was the seat that was the farthest away from Mrs. Jewls.

Mrs. Jewls was teaching the class about fractions. She drew a picture of a pie on the blackboard. She cut the pie into eight pieces. She explained that each piece was one-eighth of the pie.

Paul never paid attention. He didn't see the picture of the pie. He didn't see anything.

Well, he did see one thing.

Actually, he saw two things.

He saw Leslie's two pigtails.

Leslie sat in front of Paul. She had two long, brown pigtails that reached all the way down to her waist.

Paul saw those pigtails, and a terrible urge came over him. He wanted to pull a pigtail. He wanted to wrap his fist around it, feel the hair between his fingers, and just yank.

He thought it would also be fun to tie the pigtails together, or better yet, tie them to her chair. But most of all, he just wanted to pull one.

Slowly he reached for the one on the right. "NO! What am I doing?" he thought. "I'll only get into trouble."

Paul had it made. He sat in the back of the room. He paid no attention to anyone, and nobody paid any attention to him. But if he pulled a pigtail, it would be all over. Leslie would tell on him, and he'd become the center of attention.

He sighed and slowly withdrew his arm.

But Paul couldn't ignore those pigtails. There they were, dangling right in front of him, just begging to be pulled. He could close his eyes, but he couldn't make the pigtails disappear. He could still smell them. And hear them. He could almost taste them.

"Maybe just a little tug," he thought. "No, none."

There they hung, easily within his reach.

"Well let them just hang there!" thought Paul.

It would be foolish to pull one, no matter how tempting they were. None of the other children in the class pulled pigtails; why should he? Of course, none of the other children sat behind Leslie, either.

It was just a simple matter of being able to think clearly. That was all. Paul thought it over and decided not to pull one. It was as simple as that.

Suddenly his arm shot forward. He grabbed Leslie's right pigtail and yanked.

"Yaaaaaahhhhhhhhhh!" screamed Leslie.

Everybody looked at her.

"Paul pulled my pigtail," she said.

They all looked at Paul.

"I . . . I couldn't help it," said Paul.

"You'd better learn to help it," said Mrs. Jewls. She wrote Paul's name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE. "Tell Leslie you're sorry."

"I'm sorry, Leslie," said Paul.

"Hmmmph," said Leslie.

Paul felt horrible. Never again would he pull another pigtail! Except, there was one problem. He still wasn't satisfied. He had pulled the right one, but that wasn't enough. He wanted to pull the left one, too. It was as if he heard a little voice coming from the pigtail saying, "Pull me, Paul. Pull me."

"I can't," Paul answered. "My name's already on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE."

"Big deal," said the pigtail. "Pull me."

"No way," said Paul. "Never again."

"Aw, come on, Paul, just a little tug," urged the pigtail. "What harm could it do?"

"Lots of harm," said Paul. "Leslie will scream, and I'll get in trouble again."

"Boy, that's not fair," whined the pigtail. "You pulled the right one. Now it's my turn."

"I know, but I can't," said Paul.

"Sure you can," said the pigtail. "Just grab me and yank."

"No," said Paul. "It's not right."

"Sure it is, Paul," said the pigtail. "Pigtails are meant to be pulled. That's what we're here for."

"Tell that to Leslie," said Paul.

"Leslie won't mind," said the pigtail. "I promise."

"I bet," said Paul. "Just like she didn't mind the last time."

"You just didn't pull hard enough," said the pigtail. "Leslie likes us pulled real hard."

"Really?" asked Paul.

"Cross my heart," said the pigtail, "the harder, the better."

"Okay," said Paul, "but if you're lying. . . ."

"I promise," said the pigtail.

Paul grabbed the left pigtail. It felt good in his hand. He pulled as hard as he could.

"Yaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!" screamed Leslie.

Mrs. Jewls asked, "Paul, did you pull Leslie's pigtail again?"

"No," said Paul. "I pulled the other one."

All the children laughed.

"Are you trying to be funny?" asked Mrs. Jewls.

“No,” said Paul. “I was trying to be fair. I couldn’t pull one and not the other.”

The children laughed again.

“Pigtails are meant to be pulled,” Paul concluded.

Mrs. Jewls put a check next to Paul’s name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

But at last Paul was satisfied. True, his name was on the blackboard with a check next to it, but that really didn’t matter. All he had to do was stay out of trouble the rest of the day, and his name would be erased. It’s easy to stay out of trouble when you have the best seat in the class.

In fact, Paul could do this every day. He could pull Leslie’s pigtails twice, and then stay out of trouble the rest of the day. There was nothing Leslie could do about it.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, Leslie screamed, “Yaaaahhhhhhhh!”

Mrs. Jewls circled Paul’s name and sent him home early on the kindergarten bus. Nobody would believe that he hadn’t pulled Leslie’s pigtail again.

11

Dana

Dana had four beautiful eyes. She wore glasses. But her eyes were so beautiful that the glasses only made her prettier. With two eyes she was pretty. With four eyes she was beautiful. With six eyes she would have been even more beautiful. And if she had a hundred eyes, all over her face and her arms and her feet, why, she would have been the most beautiful creature in the world.

But poor Dana wasn't covered from head to foot with beautiful eyes. She was covered with mosquito bites.

Mrs. Jewls picked up her yardstick and said, "Now it's time for arithmetic."

"Oh, no, Mrs. Jewls," said Dana. "I can't do arithmetic. I itch all over. I can't concentrate."

"But we have all kinds of arithmetic," said Mrs. Jewls, "addition without carrying, addition with carrying, and carrying without addition."

"I don't care," cried Dana.

"We have that, too," said Mrs. Jewls, "addition without caring. Now, stop carrying on."

Dana whined, "I can't, Mrs. Jewls. I itch too much."

"And I'm too thirsty," said D.J.

"I'm too tired," said Ron.

"I'm too hungry," said Terrence.

"I'm too stupid," said Todd.

Mrs. Jewls hit her desk with her yardstick. Everyone stopped talking.

Mrs. Jewls said, "We are going to have arithmetic now, and I don't want to hear another thing about it."

"But, Mrs. Jewls, I really do itch. I can't do arithmetic," Dana whined.

"No," said Mrs. Jewls. "Arithmetic is the best known cure for an itch. How many mosquito bites do you have?"

"I don't know," said Dana, "over a hundred. First I try scratching one, but then another one starts to itch. So I scratch that one, and that one stops, and another one starts. So I scratch that one, and the itch moves down to another one. Then it goes back to the first one. The itch just never stays in the same place. I just can't scratch them all."

"What you need is a good, strong dose of arithmetic," said Mrs. Jewls.

"I'd rather have calamine lotion," said Dana.

"Remember, Dana," said Mrs. Jewls, "mosquito bites itch, not numbers."

“So what?” said Dana.

Mrs. Jewls continued. “We’ll just have to turn your mosquito bites into numbers.”

“I’m a mess,” Dana moaned.

Mrs. Jewls began to turn the mosquito bites into numbers. “How much is three mosquito bites plus three mosquito bites?” she asked.

Rondi raised her hand. “Six mosquito bites,” she answered.

“How much is six mosquito bites minus two mosquito bites?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Four mosquito bites,” said D.J.

“How much is five mosquito bites times two?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Ten mosquito bites,” said Bebe.

“Very good,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“I still itch,” Dana complained.

“I’ve got one more question,” said Mrs. Jewls. “How much is forty-nine mosquito bites plus seventy-five mosquito bites?”

Nobody raised a hand.

“Think, class,” said Mrs. Jewls. “This is for Dana.”

Nobody knew the answer. Dana’s itch began to get worse and worse.

At last, Dana began counting her own mosquito bites. She counted seventy-five on one side and forty-nine on the other. Then she added them together for a total of one hundred and twenty-four mosquito bites.

“One hundred and twenty-four mosquito bites,” Dana called.

“Very good,” said Mrs. Jewls.

Dana had one hundred and twenty-four mosquito bites. And none of them itched anymore.

“I’m still thirsty,” said D.J. “Can arithmetic do anything for that?”

“I’m still tired,” said Ron.

“I’m still hungry,” said Terrence.

“I’m still stupid,” said Todd.

“I’m glad we turned my mosquito bites into numbers instead of letters,” said Dana. “I could never spell *mosquito.*”

12

Jason

Jason had a small face and a big mouth. He had the second biggest mouth in Mrs. Jewls's class. And there were an awful lot of big mouths in that

class.

"Mrs. Jewls," Jason called without raising his hand. "Joy is chewing gum in class!"

Joy had the biggest mouth in Mrs. Jewls's class. And it was filled with gum. There was hardly even room for her tongue.

"Joy, I'm ashamed of you," said Mrs. Jewls. "I'm afraid I'll have to put your name up on the board."

"That's okay, Mrs. Jewls," Jason called. "I'll do it." Jason hopped out of his seat and wrote Joy's name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

While he was up, Joy took the glob of gum out of her mouth and placed it on Jason's chair.

Rondi and Allison giggled.

Jason walked back from the blackboard to his desk and sat down. "Mrs. Jewls," he called, "I'm STUCK!"

Rondi and Allison giggled again.

Mrs. Jewls got angry. "Joy, you're going home on the kindergarten bus today."

"Oh, good," said Todd. "I'll have some company." Todd went home on the kindergarten bus every day. He could never seem to make it to twelve o'clock without getting into trouble three times. His name wasn't even up on the blackboard yet. But he knew that by twelve o'clock it would be up, checked, and circled.

"Mrs. Jewls, what am I going to do? I'm stuck! I'm going to have to stay here the rest of my life!" said Jason.

"Joy, tell Jason you're sorry," said Mrs. Jewls.

"I'm sorry, Jason," said Joy.

"Oh, that's okay, Joy," said Jason. "I don't mind."

"Try to get up, Jason," said Mrs. Jewls.

Jason tried. "I can't, Mrs. Jewls. I'm stuck."

Mrs. Jewls asked the three Erics to help. Eric Fry and Eric Ovens pulled Jason. Eric Bacon held the chair.

"Stop," cried Jason. "You'll rip my pants."

Rondi and Allison giggled.

"All right," said Mrs. Jewls. "Let's try ice water. That should freeze the gum and make it less sticky. I'll go get some from Miss Mush."

Miss Mush was the lunch teacher at Wayside School. She had the remarkable ability to undercook a dish and overcook it at the same time. Her specialty was a nice, hot bowl of mud. She called it porridge.

Jason looked at Rondi and Allison. “No, Mrs. Jewls,” he said. “Don’t leave me. Besides, Miss Mush’s ice water is probably warm.”

“Don’t be silly, Jason,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I’m sure it will be at least as cold as her soups.”

Rondi and Allison leered at Jason.

“No, Mrs. Jewls, don’t go!” begged Jason.

“I’ll be right back, Jason,” said Mrs. Jewls. She went to Miss Mush for some ice water.

As soon as Mrs. Jewls stepped out the door, Rondi and Allison jumped up from their seats and started to tickle Jason. He laughed until his hair turned purple. The girls got back to their seats just as Mrs. Jewls returned.

Mrs. Jewls carried a big bucket of ice cold water.

“Oh, no, please don’t, no!” Jason pleaded.

“We have no choice,” said Mrs. Jewls. She threw the water all over him.

“Well,” said Mrs. Jewls, “try to get up.”

Jason was drenched. “I’m wet and I’m cold and I’m still stuck!”

“Oh, well, it didn’t work,” said Mrs. Jewls. “At least we tried. Now I guess we’ll have to cut your pants off.”

Rondi and Allison giggled.

“No, Mrs. Jewls, no!” Jason screamed. “I don’t mind being stuck here. I’m really very comfortable.”

“Don’t be silly, Jason,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Don’t cut off my pants,” said Jason.

“The three Erics can carry you to the bathroom,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I’ll ask Louis to call your mother. She can bring you a new pair of pants.”

The three Erics took hold of Jason’s chair and turned him upside down.

“No, Mrs. Jewls,” said Jason. “Now I’ll always have a place to sit down. I won’t have to worry about finding a seat on the bus.”

The three Erics began to take him away.

“Wait,” said Joy. “Mrs. Jewls, if I can get Jason unstuck, do I still have to go home on the kindergarten bus?”

“All right,” said Mrs. Jewls. “If you can somehow get Jason free, you don’t have to go home early.”

“Don’t trust her, Mrs. Jewls,” said Jason. He was still hanging upside down.

“I’ll just kiss him,” said Joy.

“No!” Jason screamed. “Don’t let her kiss me, Mrs. Jewls. Throw water on me. Tickle me. Cut off my pants. Hang me upside down from the ceiling. But don’t let her kiss me!”

“I’ll just kiss him on the nose,” said Joy.

“We’ve got nothing to lose, Jason,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Oooooh, who would want to kiss Jason!” said Allison.

Jason hung helplessly upside down.

Joy stepped up and kissed him on the nose.

Jason fell out of the chair and hit his head on the floor.

Rondi and Allison giggled.

“Darn,” said Todd. “Now I’ll have to go home alone again.”

Joy erased her name from the blackboard.

13

Rondi

Rondi had twenty-two beautiful teeth. Everyone else had twenty-four. Rondi was missing her two front teeth. And those were the most beautiful teeth of all.

“Your front teeth are so cute,” said Mrs. Jewls. “They make you look just adorable.”

“But, Mrs. Jewls,” said Rondi. “I don’t have any front teeth.”

“I know,” said Mrs. Jewls. “That’s what makes them so cute.”

Rondi didn’t understand.

‘“Oooh, Rondi, I just love your two front teeth,” said Maurecia. “I wish I had some like that.”

“But I don’t have them,” said Rondi.

“That’s why I love them so much,” said Maurecia.

“Oh, this is silly,” said Rondi. “Everybody thinks the teeth I don’t have are cute. I’m not wearing a coat. Don’t you all just love my coat? And what about my third arm? I don’t have one. Isn’t it lovely?”

“Love your hat, Rondi,” said Joy.

“I’m not wearing a hat!” Rondi screamed.

“That’s what makes it so interesting,” said Joy. “Don’t you think so, Leslie?”

“Oh, yes,” said Leslie. “It’s a very nice hat. Nice boots, too.”

“I’m not wearing boots!” Rondi insisted.

“Yes,” said Joy, “very nice boots. They go so well with your hat.”

“What hat?” asked Rondi.

“Yes,” Leslie agreed. “Rondi showed excellent taste by not wearing the hat or the boots. They go so well together.”

Rondi had had enough. She covered her head so nobody could see her hat. She put her feet under her desk so nobody could see her boots. Then she closed her mouth tightly so nobody could see her two front teeth.

Suddenly, everybody who was sitting near her began to laugh.

“What’s so funny?” asked Todd.

“The joke Rondi didn’t tell,” said Jason.

“Ask Rondi not to tell it again, Todd,” said Calvin.

“Rondi,” said Todd, “don’t tell it again.”

Rondi was horrified. She didn’t know what to do. She kept her mouth shut and just stared at Todd. To her amazement, Todd laughed.

“Hey, everybody,” called Todd. “Listen to Rondi’s joke.”

Rondi didn’t say a word, but the rest of the class began to laugh.

Mrs. Jewls got very angry. She wrote Rondi's name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

"The classroom is not the place for jokes," she said.

"But, Mrs. Jewls," said Rondi. "I didn't tell a joke."

"Yes, I know," said Mrs. Jewls, "but the funniest jokes are the ones that remain untold."

"Okay, okay," said Rondi. "If that's what you want, then that's what you'll get. I'll really tell a joke. That way I won't disturb the class. And tomorrow I'll wear boots and a hat. Of course, you won't like them as much as the ones I didn't wear today. But I better hurry up and tell my joke before you all start to laugh.

"There was a monkey sitting in a banana tree. He was very hungry. He knew that somewhere in the tree there was a magic banana, and that once he ate that banana, he wouldn't be hungry anymore. He ate one banana. That wasn't it. He was still hungry. He ate another banana. That one wasn't it, either. He was still hungry. Finally, after he ate his tenth banana, he wasn't hungry anymore. 'I knew I'd find it,' he said. 'It's too bad I didn't eat that one first. I wouldn't have had to waste all those other bananas.'"

Nobody laughed. Nobody had even listened to Rondi. Mrs. Jewls was busy teaching arithmetic, and everybody else was paying strict attention.

Rondi slapped herself in the face to make sure she was really there. She was.

The bell rang for recess. Rondi ran outside. She was very upset.

Louis, the yard teacher, saw her. "Why the frown, Rondi?" he asked. "Come on, smile. Let me see your cute front teeth."

Rondi screamed. She socked Louis in the stomach, then bit his arm with her missing teeth. And that kind of bite hurts the worst.

14

Sammy

It was a horrible, stinky, rainy day. Some rainy days are fun and exciting, but not this one. This one stunk. All the children were wet and wore smelly raincoats. The whole room smelled awful.

"Ooooh, it stinks in here," said Maurecia.

Everybody laughed. But she was right.

There was one good thing, however. There was a new boy in class. New kids are always fun. Except no one could even tell what the new boy

looked like. He was completely covered by his raincoat.

“Class,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I’d like you all to meet Sammy. Let us show him what a nice class we can be.”

Leslie walked up and smiled at Sammy. But her smile quickly turned into a frown. “You smell terrible,” she said.

“Leslie!” exclaimed Mrs. Jewls. “That’s no way to greet a new member of our class. “Mrs. Jewls wrote Leslie’s name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

“But he does, Mrs. Jewls,” said Leslie. “He smells awful.”

“You’re ugly,” Sammy replied.

“Now, Sammy, that’s no way to talk,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Leslie’s a very pretty girl.”

“She’s ugly,” said Sammy.

Allison spoke up. “Well, you smell terrible and are probably even uglier. But nobody can see you because you are hiding under that smelly old raincoat.”

“That will be enough of that,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Now, Sammy, why don’t you take off your coat and hang it in the closet? Let us all see how nice you look.”

“I don’t want to, you old windbag,” said Sammy.

“That’s because he’s so ugly,” said Leslie.

“I’m sure he’s quite handsome,” said Mrs. Jewls. “He’s just shy. Here, let me help you.” Mrs. Jewls took off Sammy’s coat for him. But underneath it was still another raincoat, even dirtier and smellier than the first one.

They still couldn’t see his face.

“Ooooh, now he smells even worse,” said Maurecia.

“You don’t exactly smell like a rose, either,” Sammy replied.

Mrs. Jewls took off his second raincoat, but there was still another one under that. And the smell became so bad that Mrs. Jewls had to run and stick her head out the window to get some fresh air.

“You’re all a bunch of pigs!” Sammy screeched. “Dirty, rotten pigs!”

The smell was overpowering. Sammy just stood there, hidden under his raincoats.

Mrs. Jewls wrote Sammy’s name under the word DISCIPLINE.

“Send him home on the kindergarten bus,” said Joy.

“Not with me,” said Todd.

Mrs. Jewls held her nose, walked up to Sammy, and removed his raincoat. She threw it out the window. But he had on still another one.

Sammy hissed. “Hey, old windbag, watch where you throw my good clothes!”

Mrs. Jewls put a check next to Sammy’s name on the blackboard. Then she took off another raincoat and threw it out the window. The smell got worse, for he had on still another one.

Sammy began to laugh. His horrible laugh was even worse than his horrible voice.

When Sammy first came into the room, he was four feet tall. But after Mrs. Jewls removed six of his raincoats, he was only three feet tall. And there were still more raincoats to go.

Mrs. Jewls circled his name and removed another coat. She threw it out the window. Then she put a triangle around the circle and threw another one of his coats outside. She kept doing this until Sammy was only one-and-a-half feet high. With every coat she took off, Sammy’s laugh got louder and the smell got worse.

Some of the children held their ears. Others could hold only one ear because they were holding their nose with the other hand. It was hard to say which was worse, the laugh or the smell.

Sammy stopped laughing and said, “Hey, old windbag, if you take off one more of my coats and throw it out the window, I’ll bite your head off.”

“They smell too bad for me to allow them in my classroom,” said Mrs. Jewls. “You can pick them up when you leave.”

“They smell better than you do, Pighead!” Sammy shouted.

Mrs. Jewls didn’t stop. She took off another one of his coats, then another, and another. Sammy was only four inches tall, three inches tall, two inches tall. At last she removed the final coat.

All that was there was a dead rat.

“Well, I don’t allow dead rats in my classroom,” said Mrs. Jewls. She picked it up by the tail, put it in a plastic bag, and threw it away.

Mrs. Jewls didn’t allow dead rats in her class. Todd once brought in a dead rat for show-and-tell, and Mrs. Jewls made him throw that one away, too.

“I’m glad Sammy isn’t allowed in our classroom,” said Rondi. “I didn’t like him very much.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Jewls, “we caught another one.”

Dead rats were always trying to sneak into Mrs. Jewls’s class. That was the third one she’d caught since September.

15

Deedee

This story contains a problem and a solution.

Deedee was a mousey looking kid. Unlike most children at Wayside School, she liked recess better than spelling. As soon as the recess bell rang, she would jump up from her seat and run out the door.

There were big signs in Wayside School on every floor, “NO JUMPING DOWN THE STAIRS.”

Deedee never seemed to notice the signs. She jumped down the stairs. Some children took the stairs two at a time. Deedee took them ten at a time. That was on the way down. It was funny. She never seemed to be in quite the same hurry on the way back up.

There was another sign at Wayside School, “NO CUTTING ACROSS THE GRASS.” Deedee must not ever have seen that one, either. She cut across the grass and ran up to Louis, the yard teacher.

“I want a green ball,” Deedee said. The green balls were the best.

“I’m all out of green balls,” said Louis.

“Okay, then I want a red ball,” said Deedee. The red balls were just about as good as the green balls. They didn’t bounce as high, but actually, sometimes you don’t want a ball to bounce too high.

“I’m all out of red balls, too,” said Louis.

“Do you have anything left?” asked Deedee.

Deedee meant anything besides the yellow ball. There was one yellow ball at Wayside School and Louis was always trying to get rid of it. It didn’t bounce, and it never went the way it was kicked.

“Anything at all?” asked Deedee.

“Today is your lucky day,” said Louis. “I have one ball left, just for you; the one and only yellow ball!”

“No, thanks,” said Deedee.

“Aw, come on, take it,” said Louis.

“Why don’t you ever have any green or red balls?” asked Deedee.

“I do,” said Louis. “But the other children ask first. By the time you get out here, they’re all gone.”

“But that’s because I have to come all the way from the thirtieth story. How do you expect me to compete with the kids from the first or second?” she asked.

“That’s why I saved you the yellow ball,” said Louis. “Everybody wanted it, but I saved it just for you.”

“I bet,” said Deedee.

She took the yellow ball and bounced it on the ground. It stopped dead with a thud. She stepped back, ran up, and kicked it. It went backwards over her head. She didn't bother chasing it.

Instead she played hopscotch with Jennie and Leslie. She thought it was disgusting.

The next day, Deedee asked Mrs. Jewls if she could go to recess early.

"Why?" asked Mrs. Jewls.

"So I can get a green ball before Louis gives them all away," said Deedee.

"I'm glad you have a good reason," said Mrs. Jewls. "Yes, you may go. But first, spell *Mississippi* for me."

Spelling was not Deedee's best subject. By the time she finally got it right, she was five minutes late for recess.

She jumped down the stairs, cut across the grass, and ran up to Louis. There were no green balls left. There were no red balls left, either. However, there was still the yellow ball.

Deedee played jump rope with Joy and Maurecia. It was no better than hopscotch.

So Deedee's problem was to figure out a way to get a green ball, or at least a red ball.

You already know that this story also contains a solution. Deedee figured it out. See if you can, too. Remember everything you know about Deedee, Wayside School, and Mrs. Jewls.

Hint: The next day, Deedee brought a cream cheese and jelly sandwich, some nuts, and shredded cheese in her lunchbox.

Here's what happened.

Just before recess, Deedee smeared the cream cheese and jelly all over her face. Then she stuffed her mouth with nuts and hung the shredded cheese from her nose. When she closed her eyes, she looked just like a dead rat.

Todd was in on the plan. "Mrs. Jewls," he called. "There's a dead rat in the classroom."

Mrs. Jewls was very put out. "I want that dead rat outside immediately!"

When Mrs. Jewls said *immediately*, she meant it. Deedee instantly found herself outside on the playground.

"I want a green ball," she said.

Louis pretended that he hadn’t heard her.

“May I *please* have a green ball?” asked Deedee.

Louis gave her a green ball. “I don’t know how you did it, Deedee, but you’re first today,” he said.

When Mrs. Jewls found out that Deedee and Todd had tricked her, she sent Todd home early on the kindergarten bus.

Deedee threw the green ball on the ground. It bounced fifty feet straight up in the air, and then she caught it.

“You don’t like me, do you?” she asked Louis.

“Sure I do,” said Louis.

“No, you don’t,” said Deedee.

“Yes, I like you,” said Louis.

“No, you don’t,” Deedee insisted.

“Yes, I like you. I really do,” said Louis.

“Are you sure?” asked Deedee.

“Yes,” said Louis. “Don’t you believe me?”

“I guess so,” said Deedee.

“Do you like me?” asked Louis.

“You bet,” said Deedee. “You’re my best friend!”

“Terrific,” said Louis. “I always wanted to be best friends with a dead rat.”

16

D.J.

D.J. skipped up the thirty flights of stairs to Mrs. Jewls's room. He was grinning from ear to ear, from nose to chin, from here to there, and back again.

"Hey, D.J.," Todd shouted, "glad to see you." Todd was a pushover for smiling faces.

Mrs. Jewls heard him. She began to write Todd's name on the board under DISCIPLINE, but when she saw D.J.'s smile, she put down the chalk. "Good morning, D.J.," she said. "What are you so happy about?"

D.J. grinned and shrugged his shoulders.

Mrs. Jewls smiled.

Dameon looked at the smile on Mrs. Jewls's face, then at Todd's, and finally at D.J.'s. Then Dameon smiled, too. His smile was almost as big as D.J.'s. They were best friends.

Once they saw the two of them smiling, the rest of the class couldn't help but smile. Rondi had a very cute one, due to her two missing front teeth. Nobody had an ugly smile.

Jason came to school late. He was very upset. But the first thing he saw was Dameon's smile, and he felt a little bit better. Then he saw Rondi's toothless grin, and he even began to smile a little himself. But when he saw the piano on D.J.'s face, he fell, laughing, onto the floor.

Everybody started to laugh, even Kathy, and she hardly ever laughed except when someone hurt himself.

The whole room seemed to be laughing, not just the people in it. The blackboard chuckled. The ceiling snickered. The desks were jumping up and down, and the chairs were slapping one another on the back. The floor was very ticklish. It laughed until the walls turned purple. The wastepaper basket started to sing, and all the pencils stood up and danced.

Finally things began to settle down. Mrs. Jewls wiped her eyes and said, "D.J., why don't you tell the class why you are so happy? At least let us know what we are laughing about."

But D.J. just kept on smiling.

"Aw, come on, D.J.," said Deedee. "Tell us."

D.J. didn't say a word. He couldn't. His mouth was stretched out of shape.

"Let us guess," said Ron. "If we guess right, will you tell us?"

D.J. nodded his head. His smile began to hurt his ears.

Everyone took one guess.

"Have you been swimming?"

"Is it your birthday?"

"Are you in love?"

"Did you get a green ball?"

Nobody guessed right.

At recess D.J. was still smiling.

Louis, the yard teacher, called, "Hey, D.J. Come here."

They walked to the far comer of the playground, where they were alone.

"What's up, D.J.?" Louis asked.

D.J. just smiled.

“Come on, D.J. You can tell me. Why are you so happy?”

D.J. looked up at him. He said, “You need a reason to be sad. You don’t need a reason to be happy.”

17

John

John had light brown hair and a round head. He was Joe's best friend. John was one of the smartest boys in Mrs. Jewls's class. But he had one problem. He could only read words written upside down.

Nobody ever wrote anything upside down.

But it was only a little problem. John was still in the high reading group. He just turned his book upside down.

It was easier for John to turn his book upside down than to learn to read correctly. But the easiest way isn't always the best way.

Mrs. Jewls said, "John, you can't go on reading like this. You can't spend the rest of your life turning your books upside down."

"Why not?" asked John.

"Because I said so," said Mrs. Jewls. "Besides, what happens when I write something on the blackboard? You can't turn the blackboard upside down."

"No, I guess you're right," said John.

"I know I'm right," said Mrs. Jewls. "You are going to have to learn to stand on your head."

John couldn't stand on his head. He had given up trying. You would have, too, if you had fallen over as many times as he had.

Joe was John's best friend. He could stand on John's head. Every time John fell over, Joe stood on his head. After all, what are best friends for?

"My head is too round, Mrs. Jewls. I can't stand on it," said John.

"Of course you can, John," said Mrs. Jewls. "If Joe can stand on your head, so can you."

"It's easy, John," said Joe.

"I can't," John repeated. "I always fall over."

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Jewls. "All you have to do is find your center of balance. Now, up you go."

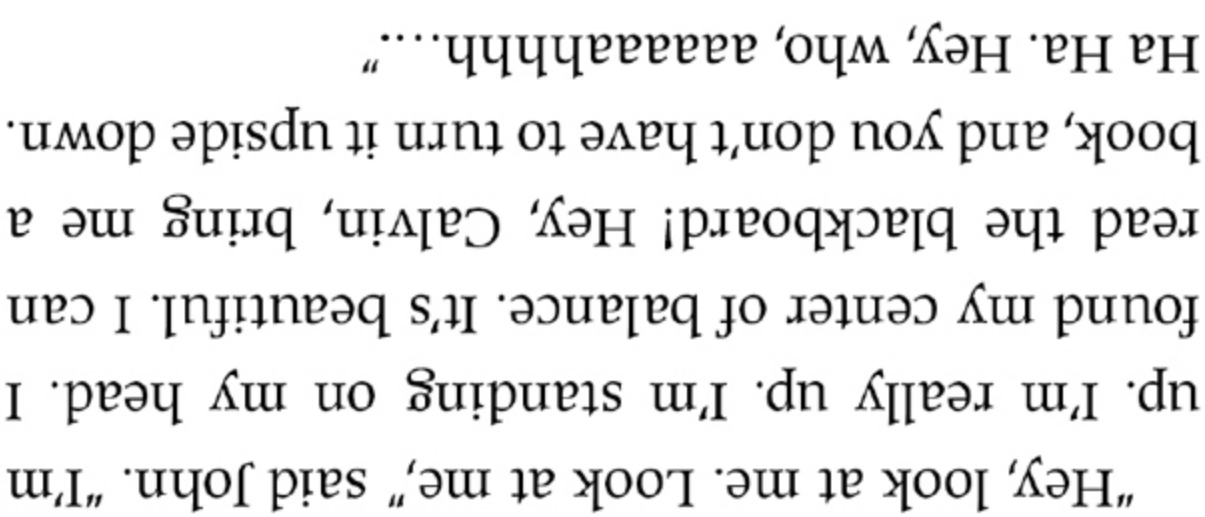
John put his round head on the floor and swung his legs up. He fell right over. Then Joe stood on John's head.

"See, John, it's easy. Nothing to it," Joe said.

"We'll help you, John," said Mrs. Jewls. "Joe, get off John's head and get me the pillow from under my desk. Nancy, Calvin, come here and give us a hand."

Mrs. Jewls took the pillow from Joe and set it on the floor. "All right, John, we'll surround you," she said. "We won't let you fall."

John put his head on the pillow and swung his legs up. He started to fall one way, but Nancy pushed him back up. Then he started to fall another way, but Calvin straightened him out. John kept falling a little bit this way and that way until at last he found his center of balance.


"Hey, look at me. Look at me," said John. "I'm
up. I'm really up. I'm standing on my head. I
found my center of balance. It's beautiful. I can
read the blackboard! Hey, Calvin, bring me a
book, and you don't have to turn it upside down.
Ha Ha. Hey, who, aaaaaahhhh...."

BAMM!! While Calvin went to get the book, John fell flat on his face.

"You better stay off my head, Joe," he warned.

"Are you all right, John?" asked Mrs. Jewls.

"Yes, I think so. I feel a little funny. Hey! I can still read the blackboard, and I'm not upside down. I can read right side up now. When I fell, I must have flipped my brain or something."

"That is wonderful, John," said Mrs. Jewls. "Here, put the pillow back under my desk. As a reward you may have a Tootsie Roll pop. They are in the coffee can on top of my desk."

John placed the pillow on top of her desk. Then he looked under the desk, but he couldn't find the Tootsie Roll pops anywhere.

18

Leslie

Leslie had five fingers on each hand and five toes on each foot. For each hand she had an arm, and for each foot she had a leg. She was a very lucky

girl. And she had two lovely, long brown pigtails that reached all the way down to her waist.

When Mrs. Jewls asked a question, Leslie could raise one of her hands.

When Leslie was adding, she could count on her fingers.

When Paul pulled one of her pigtails, she could kick him with one foot while standing on the other.

But Leslie had one problem. She didn't know what to do with her toes. She had ten adorable little toes and nothing to do with them. As far as she could tell, they served no useful purpose.

"Suck your toes. That's what I do," said Sharie.

But Leslie's foot wouldn't reach her mouth.

"Well, that's all toes are good for," said Sharie. She put her foot in her mouth and went to sleep.

"No," thought Leslie. "They must be good for something. They just have to be."

During recess, she asked Dana. "Dana, what do you do with your toes?"

"I scratch the back of my legs," said Dana. "First I scratch my left leg with my right foot. Then I scratch my right leg with my left foot."

"But my legs don't itch," said Leslie.

"That's good," said Dana. "In that case you can scratch my legs. With your help I can scratch both legs at the same time."

"No, never mind," said Leslie. She walked up behind Louis, the yard teacher, and hopped on his shoulders.

"Louis," said Leslie. "I don't know what to do with my toes."

Louis tugged her foot. "Yes, that is a serious problem," he said, "but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll take them off your hands for you, or rather, your feet. Just cut them off and give them to me."

"What?" asked Leslie.

"You don't want them, so I'll take them," said Louis. "You won't have to worry about them ever again."

"No," said Leslie.

"I'll give them to Miss Mush," said Louis. "She can make little hot dogs out of them." Miss Mush was the lunch teacher.

"No, I'm not going to give my toes away," said Leslie.

"All right," said Louis. "I'll give you a nickel apiece for them."

"No, you can't have them," said Leslie.

“Why not?” Louis asked. “They’re no good to you, anyhow. And think of all you can buy for fifty cents.”

The bell rang.

“I’ll think it over,” said Leslie. She ran back to class.

“Mrs. Jewls,” said Leslie, “I don’t see any reason for keeping my toes.”

“Oh, Leslie, I’m sure there are lots of good reasons,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Well, I can’t think of any. My legs don’t itch, and I can’t get my foot in my mouth. Louis offered me a nickel apiece for them, and it seems to me like a good deal. But I wanted to check with you first.”

“I think Louis was pulling your leg,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“No,” said Leslie, “he was pulling my toes.”

“What would he want with your toes?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“I don’t know,” said Leslie, “but if he’s willing to give me five cents apiece for them, then I’m going to take him up on it. That’s fifty cents.”

At lunch, Leslie walked up to Louis. “Okay, Louis,” she said, “you can have my toes for a nickel apiece. That will be fifty cents.”

“Not so fast,” said Louis. “Let me look at them first.”

Leslie took off her shoes.

“Yes, yes,” said Louis, “the big ones are good, and the ones next to them, but the most I’ll give you for the rest of your toes is three cents each.”

Leslie was furious. “Three cents each! You told me five at recess.”

“I’ll give you five cents for the big ones. But just look at that scrawny little runt of a toe on the end, there. You’re lucky to be getting even three cents for it. I think you’re getting a darn good deal.”

“I happen to like that toe,” said Leslie.

“Fine, then,” said Louis, “keep it. I’ll just take the two big toes, and we’ll call it square.” He reached in his pocket and pulled out a dime.

“Nothing doing,” said Leslie. “These toes are sold as a set. It’s either all ten for fifty cents or no deal. What am I going to do with just eight toes?”

“Then forget it,” said Louis. “I’m not going to give you a nickel for those scrawny little end toes.”

“Fine,” said Leslie, “no deal. My toes will still be here if you change your mind.” She turned and walked toward the hopscotch area.

“Wait a second,” Louis called. “I’ll give you a dollar each for your pigtails.”

Leslie turned around and looked at him with fiery eyes. “Cut my hair!” she exclaimed. “Are you crazy?”

19

Miss Zarves

There is no Miss Zarves. There is no nineteenth story. Sorry.

20

Kathy

Kathy doesn’t like you. She doesn’t know you, but she still doesn’t like you. She thinks you are stupid! In fact, she thinks you are the stupidest person she doesn’t know. What do you think of that?

She also thinks you’re ugly! As a matter of fact, she thinks you are the ugliest person she doesn’t know. And she doesn’t know a lot of people.

She doesn’t like the people she knows, either. She hates everybody in Mrs. Jewls’s class. She did like one member of the class. She liked Sammy. She thought he was funny. Sammy was a dead rat.

But Kathy has good reasons for not liking any of the children she knows. She doesn’t like D.J. because he smiles too much, and she doesn’t like John because he can’t stand on his head.

Kathy once had a cat named Skunks. She liked Skunks. But she was afraid that Skunks would run away.

“You have nothing to worry about, Kathy,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Skunks won’t run away. Just be nice to him and feed him and pet him, and he won’t run away. He may go out and play, but he’ll always come back.”

“No, you’re wrong, Mrs. Jewls,” said Kathy. “What do you know! He’ll run away.”

So Kathy kept Skunks locked up in her closet at home. She never let him out and sometimes even forgot to feed him.

One day, while Kathy was looking for her other shoe, Skunks ran out of the closet and never came back.

“You said he would come back, Mrs. Jewls,” said Kathy. “He never came back. You were wrong. I was right.”

That was why Kathy didn’t like Mrs. Jewls.

“The next time I get a cat, I’ll kill him. Then he’ll never run away,” said Kathy.

Then there was the time that Dameon tried to teach Kathy how to play catch.

Dameon said, “When I throw you the ball, Kathy, try to catch it.”

“I can’t catch it,” said Kathy. “I’ll just get hurt.”

“You won’t get hurt,” Dameon insisted. “Just watch the ball.”

He tossed it to her.

But Kathy knew she’d get hurt. So she closed her eyes. The ball hit her on the cheek. It hurt.

Kathy began to cry. “You were wrong,” she sobbed. “I was right!”

That was why Kathy didn’t like Dameon.

Allison believed that if you are nice to someone, then they'll be nice to you. So one day she brought Kathy a cookie.

"I don't want your ugly cookie," said Kathy. "It probably tastes terrible!"

Allison said, "No, it is very good. I made it myself."

Kathy said, "If you made it, then it must stink! You can't cook. You're too stupid!" She just put the cookie in her desk along with her pencils, crayons, and books.

Three weeks later, Kathy was hungry. "All right, Allison," she said. "I'll try your stupid cookie." She took it out of her desk. It was covered with dust. She bit it. It was hard and tasted terrible.

"See," said Kathy. "I was right!"

That was why Kathy didn't like Allison.

Yes, Kathy had very good reasons for not liking anybody she knew.

But she also has a good reason for not liking you. And she doesn't even know you. Her reason is this. She knows that if you ever met her, you wouldn't like her. You don't like Kathy, do you?

See, she was right!

It's funny how a person can be right all the time and still be wrong.

21

Ron

Ron had curly hair and little feet. “I want to play kickball,” he said.

“You can’t play,” said Terrence.

“Get out of here,” said Deedee.

“Scram,” said Jason.

“I want to play kickball,” said Ron.

“Well, you’re not playing,” said Terrence. “Beat it!” Ron stomped across the playground to the hopscotch area. Jenny was playing hopscotch with Louis. Jenny was on nine. Louis was still on four, but it was his turn.

“I want to play kickball,” Ron said.

“So, go play kickball,” said Louis.

“Terrence won’t let me play,” said Ron.

Louis walked with Ron to the kickball field.

“Hey, what about our hopscotch game?” Jenny asked.

“You won,” said Louis.

“I just beat Louis in hopscotch!” Jenny announced. Leslie, Rondi, and Allison flocked around her.

“Hey, Louis,” Dameon shouted. “Do you want to play kickball?”

“All right,” said Louis. “Ron and I will both play.”

“No,” said Terrence. “Ron isn’t playing.”

“Anyone who wants to play can play,” said Louis.

“No, he can’t,” said Terrence. “It’s my ball.”

“It isn’t your ball,” said Louis.

“You gave it to me,” said Terrence.

“I gave it to you to share,” said Louis. “If you can’t share it, you can’t have it.”

“Oh, all right,” said Terrence. “But I get to pitch.”

“Ron and I will stand everybody!” Louis announced.

“All right!” said Jason. “We’ll kill them!”

“We’ll murder them!” said Deedee.

“We’ll smash them!” said Myron.

“We’ll see,” said Louis.

Ron pitched, and Louis played the other eight positions. Twenty minutes later, they finally got three outs. The score was twenty-one to nothing.

Ron was up first.

“Infield in!” shouted Dameon. Everybody stood within ten feet of home plate.

“All right, Ron,” Louis shouted, “kick it over their heads!”

Ron kicked the ball only three-and-a-half feet. Todd picked it up and threw him out.

Louis was up. Everybody ran back to the edge of the outfield. Still, Louis kicked the ball over their heads for a home run.

Everybody ran all the way back in again for Ron’s up. He kicked the ball only two feet. Deedee tagged him out.

Louis kicked another home run.

Ron then kicked the ball a foot and tripped over it on his way to first base. Three outs.

Ron and Louis held the other team to only five runs the next inning. That was because the bell rang. Lunch was finally over.

Louis and Ron lost twenty-six to two. Ron had had a wonderful time.

The next day Ron said, “I want to play kickball.”

“You can’t play,” said Terrence.

“Get out of here,” said Jason.

“Scram,” said Deedee.

“I want to play kickball,” Ron told Louis.

Louis walked with him to the kickball field. “Ron and I will stand all of you.”

Everybody liked the teams.

Ron pitched while Louis played the other eight positions. They lost fifty-seven to two.

After the game Louis took Ron aside. “Listen. Ron,” he said, “why do you always want to play kickball? You can’t kick. You can’t field. You can’t even run to first base. You just get smashed every game.”

“Hey, now wait a second,” said Ron. “Don’t go blaming it all on me. You’re half the team, too, you know.” And with that, he punched Louis in the stomach.

And he punched a heck of a lot harder than he kicked.

22

The Three Erics

In Mrs. Jewls's class there were three children named Eric: Eric Fry, Eric Bacon, and Eric Ovens. They were known throughout the school for being fat. Eric Fry sat at this end of the room. Eric Bacon sat in the middle of the room. And Eric Ovens sat at that end of the room. There was a joke around Wayside School that if all three Erics were ever at the same end of the room at the same time, the whole school would tip over.

Eric Bacon hated jokes like that. That's not surprising. After all, he wasn't even fat. In fact, he was the skinniest kid in Mrs. Jewls's class. But

nobody seemed to notice. The other two Erics were fat, and so everyone just thought that all Erics were fat.

"But I'm not fat!" Eric Bacon insisted.

"What's your name?" asked Jason.

"Eric," said Eric Bacon.

"Then you're fat," Jason concluded.

And pretty soon, skinny little Eric Bacon, the skinniest kid in Mrs. Jewls's class, had the nickname "Fatso."

Eric Fry really *was* fat. He was also the best athlete in Mrs. Jewls's class. His body was solid muscle. However, nobody ever noticed.

The other two Erics weren't very good at sports. Eric Ovens was clumsy. Eric ("Fatso") Bacon was a good athlete for his size, but because he was so skinny he didn't have much power.

So, naturally, everybody just assumed that Eric Fry was also clumsy and weak. After all, his name *was* Eric.

Whenever the other kids chose up teams, Eric Fry was the last one picked. They never noticed his home runs or the fabulous catches he made. Like all great athletes, he made the impossible look easy. Of course, the other kids did notice the one time that he dropped the ball.

Eric Fry was playing right field. Terrence belted a deep fly to left. Eric Fry raced all the way across the field after the ball and at the last second dived at it. He caught it in midair on his fingertips, but as he hit the ground the ball squirted loose.

"Well, what do you expect from 'Butterfingers,'" said Stephen.

And since that time Eric Fry has had the nickname "Butterfingers."

Eric Ovens was the nicest person in Mrs. Jewls's class. He treated everyone equally and always had a kind word to say. But because his name was Eric, everyone thought he was mean.

"Fatso" was mean because everyone called him "Fatso."

"Butterfingers" was mean because he always had to play right field.

So, naturally, everyone just assumed that Eric Ovens was also mean. They called him "Crabapple."

"Good morning, Allison," said Eric Ovens. "How are you?"

"Lay off, 'Crabapple'! Will ya?" answered Allison. "If you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything at all."

All three of the Erics had nicknames. It was better that way. Otherwise when someone said, "Hey, Eric," no one knew to whom he was talking.

One time all the Erics would answer, and the next time none of them would answer. But when someone said, “Hey, ‘Crabapple,’” then Eric Ovens knew they were talking to him. And if someone said, “Hey, ‘Butterfingers,’” Eric Fry knew they meant him. And when someone said, “Hey, ‘Fatso,’” Eric Bacon knew that he was being called.

23

Allison

Allison had pretty blonde hair and always wore a sky-blue windbreaker. Her windbreaker was the same color as her eyes. She was best friends with Rondi. Rondi had blonde hair, too, but she was missing her two front teeth. Allison had all of her teeth.

Allison used to say that she knocked Rondi's teeth out. Allison was very pretty, so all the boys in Mrs. Jewls's class teased her, especially Jason. But Allison said, "Leave me alone or I'll knock your teeth out—like I did Rondi's." The boys didn't bother her after that.

One day Allison brought a tangerine for lunch. She took the peel off in one piece.

Miss Mush, the lunch teacher, walked up to her. "Allison, may I have your tangerine?" she asked.

Miss Mush always gave food to the children. So Allison was happy to give her tangerine to Miss Mush.

Miss Mush shoved it in her mouth and swallowed it in less than four seconds.

Allison left the lunchroom and walked down to the library. The lunchroom was on the fifteenth story. The library was on the seventh. Allison already had her book. She just went to the library because it was nice and quiet there.

The librarian walked up to Allison. "What are you reading?" she asked.

Allison told her the name of the book.

"That sounds like a good book," said the librarian. "I never read that one. May I borrow it?"

The librarian always lent books to the children. Allison was glad to be able to return the favor. She gave the librarian the book, then walked down the stairs, outside to the playground.

All of Allison's friends were playing freeze tag. Allison didn't feel like playing. She reached into the pocket of her sky-blue windbreaker and took out a tennis ball. She bounced it a couple of times on the ground.

Louis came up to her. "Hi, Allison," he said. "May I play with your tennis ball?"

Louis always gave balls to the children. Allison happily gave her ball to Louis.

Louis threw the ball all the way to the other side of the playground. Then he went chasing after it.

Allison didn't feel like doing anything. Jason ran up and tagged her.

"You're frozen," he said.

"Get out of here before I knock your teeth out," said Allison.

Jason shrugged his shoulders and left.

Allison went back inside and up the thirty flights of stairs to Mrs. Jewls's room. The lunch period wasn't over yet, but Allison didn't feel like doing anything else. She had given her food to the lunch teacher, her book to the librarian, and her ball to the yard teacher. She went inside her classroom.

Mrs. Jewls was there. "Oh, Allison, I'm glad you're here," said Mrs. Jewls. "I'm having trouble with an arithmetic problem. Maybe you can help."

"Sure," said Allison. Mrs. Jewls always helped the children with their problems. Allison was happy to help.

"How do you spell *chair*?" asked Mrs. Jewls.

"C-H-A-I-R," said Allison.

"Yes, that's right," said Mrs. Jewls. "I knew it wasn't C-H-A-R-E, but I couldn't remember what it was."

"That's not an arithmetic problem," said Allison. "That's spelling."

"Yes, you are right again," said Mrs. Jewls. "I always get the two mixed up."

The bell rang. The lunch period was over. Allison could hear the other children running up the stairs.

"Allison," said Mrs. Jewls. "You learned a very important secret today, and I don't want you to tell any of the other children, not even Rondi."

"What was that?" asked Allison. She didn't even know she had learned a secret. She loved secrets.

"You learned that children are really smarter than their teachers," said Mrs. Jewls.

"Oh, that's no secret," said Allison. "Everybody knows that."

24

Dameon

Dameon had hazel eyes with a little black dot in the middle of each of them. The dots were called pupils. So was Dameon. He was a pupil in Mrs. Jewls’s class.

Mrs. Jewls was about to show the class a movie. She turned out the lights. When it was dark, Dameon's pupils got bigger.

"Dameon," said Mrs. Jewls, "run downstairs and ask Louis if he'd like to see the movie with us."

Dameon ran down the thirty flights of stairs to the playground. He stepped outside as Louis was hooking up a tetherball.

"Hey, Louis," Dameon called. "Do you want to see a movie in Mrs. Jewls's class?"

Louis rubbed his chin. "What movie?" he asked.

Dameon shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know," he said. "I'll be right back."

Dameon ran all the way back up the stairs to the thirtieth story.

"Louis wants to know, what movie?" said Dameon.

"Does he want to know the name of the movie or what the movie is about?" asked Mrs. Jewls.

"I don't know," said Dameon. "I'll ask him."

Dameon raced back down the stairs and out to the playground.

"Louis, do you want to know the name of the movie or what the movie is about?" he asked.

"The name," said Louis.

"Okay," said Dameon.

Dameon hurried back up the thirty flights of stairs. He took the steps two at a time.

"He wants to know the name," said Dameon.

"*Turtles*," said Mrs. Jewls.

Dameon turned around, took a deep breath, then ran back down the stairs.

"*Turtles*," Dameon told Louis.

"Hey, that might be good," said Louis. "What's it about?"

"I'm not sure," said Dameon. "I'll find out."

Dameon raced back up the stairs. But first he stopped to take a drink of water.

"What's it about, Mrs. Jewls?" asked Dameon.

"Turtles," said Mrs. Jewls.

Dameon rushed back down the stairs to tell Louis.

"Turtles," said Dameon.

"No, thanks," said Louis. "I don't like turtles. They are too slow."

Dameon lowered his head and slowly walked up the thirty flights of stairs. His legs were sore, he could hardly breathe, and his side ached.

By the time he got to Mrs. Jewls's class, the movie was over.

"All right, class," said Mrs. Jewls. "I want everybody to take out a piece of paper and a pencil and write something about turtles."

Dameon had missed the movie, but he still could have written something about turtles: "Turtles are too slow." But now he couldn't find his pencil. It just wasn't his day.

"What's the matter, Dameon?" asked Mrs. Jewls.

"I can't find my pencil," said Dameon.

"Class, Dameon's pencil is missing," Mrs. Jewls announced. "What did it look like, Dameon?" she asked.

"It was long and yellow," said Dameon. "It had a black point at one end and a red eraser at the other."

"I found it," said Todd, "here, by the blackboard."

"Yes, that's it," said Dameon.

"No, there it is, in the corner by the waste basket," said "Crabapple."

"Hmmm, maybe that's it," said Dameon.

"Here it is," said John. "It's been in my desk the whole time."

"No, here it is in my hand," said Joe.

"I found it," said Rondi.

"Here it is," said Allison.

"I have it," laughed D.J.

"I found it," said Myron.

"Which one is yours, Dameon?" asked Mrs. Jewls.

Dameon studied each pencil. "They all look like mine," he said.

Fortunately, at that moment, Louis walked into the classroom. He handed Dameon a pencil.

"You dropped this when you were telling me about the movie," said Louis.

"Thanks," said Dameon.

"Okay, class," said Mrs. Jewls. "So that we have no more mix-ups, I want everybody to write his name on his pencil."

Dameon spent the rest of the day trying to write his name on his pencil.

Dameon's pencil couldn't write on itself. It was just like his beautiful hazel eyes with the black dots in the middle. They could see everything

except themselves.

25

Jenny

Jenny came to school on the back of her father's motorcycle. She was late. Wayside School began at nine o'clock. It was almost nine-thirty. She kissed her father good-bye and raced up the thirty flights of stairs to Mrs. Jewls's room.

"I'm sorry I'm late, Mrs. Jewls, but my father's motorcycle lost a . . ." There was nobody there. The room was empty.

"Hello, hello," she cried. "Mrs. Jewls, Dana, Todd, anyone?"

There was no one in the room.

"Maybe I'm early," Jenny thought. She looked up at the clock. It was exactly nine-thirty.

"Oh, I hope they didn't go on a field trip without me." She looked out the window. Nobody was there, not even Louis.

Jenny didn't know what to do. She sat down at her desk. She watched the second hand go around on the clock. "I might as well catch up on my spelling," she thought. She opened her desk and took out her speller.

M-U-D spells *mud.*

"Where is everybody?"

B-L-O-O-D spells *blood.*

"I hope nothing happened to them."

B-L-A-C-K spells *black.*

Jenny heard footsteps coming down the hall. She began to work very fast.

H-A-C-K spells *hack.* S-M-A-C-K spells *smack.* Someone opened the door. Jenny turned around. "Ack!" she gasped.

He was a man Jenny had never seen before. He had a black mustache and a matching attaché case.

Jenny jumped out of her seat.

"Get back in your seat," the man said.

Jenny slowly sat down.

The man walked over and sat down in Dana's seat, facing Jenny. He opened his attaché case and removed some papers.

"What is your name?" he asked her.

"Jenny," Jenny whispered.

"Jenny?" the man repeated as if he didn't believe her.

"Well, it is actually Jennifer, Jenny for short," said Jenny.

"I see," said the man. He took the speller from Jenny's desk. Jenny's name was written across the top. He put the speller in his attaché case.

“What are you doing here, Jennifer?” he asked.

“This is my classroom,” said Jenny.

“Are you sure?” the man asked.

“Yes, I think so. I mean—”

“Where is the rest of your class?” the man asked.

“I don’t know,” said Jenny, “maybe they went on a field trip.”

“No,” said the man. “They didn’t go on a field trip.”

“Well, I don’t know where they are!” Jenny cried. “I was half an hour late today, and when I got here everybody was gone. Really! Did something happen to them?”

The man didn’t answer her. He wrote something on a piece of paper. “Tell me something, Jennifer. When you came to school today and saw that nobody was here, weren’t you somewhat puzzled?”

“Yes. Yes,” said Jenny. “What happened to them?”

“If you are really so concerned and so puzzled,” said the man, “why did you work on spelling?”

“I don’t know,” said Jenny.

“It would seem to me,” the man said, “that if a child came to school and nobody was there, she might play games, or walk around, or go home, but certainly not work on spelling.”

Jenny started to cry. “I didn’t know what to do. I was late and had to ride on a motorcycle and nobody was here and now you are asking me all kinds of questions and I’m afraid of what has happened to Dana and Mrs. Jewls and Rondi and Allison.”

The man didn’t understand a word she said.

Jenny heard more footsteps. The man got up and opened the door. Two more men came in. One had a black mustache like the first man. The other man was bald.

Jenny was frightened by them.

“Does she know?” asked the newcomer with the mustache.

“She claims she knows nothing,” the first man answered. “She says she was late today, and when she got here everybody was gone.”

“Do you believe her?” asked the man with the bald head.

“I’m not sure. She was working on her speller when I walked in.” He reached into his attaché case and took out Jenny’s speller. He handed it to the man with the bald head.

The bald man read Jenny's name across the top of it. "Tell me, Jenny," he said, "why are you the only one here?"

"I don't know," said Jenny.

"Has this ever happened before?" he asked.

"No, never," said Jenny.

He gave Jenny her speller. "Put this inside your desk."

Jenny put it away.

"I'm satisfied," said the man with the bald head.

"Okay, Jennifer," said the first man, "you may go now."

Jenny got out of her seat.

"Jenny," the bald man called.

Jenny turned slowly around. "Yes?" she whispered.

"Next time, don't come to school on a Saturday."

26

Terrence

Terrence was a good athlete but a bad sport.

Rondi and Allison were playing two-square with a red ball.

“Can I play?” asked Terrence.

“No,” Allison replied.

“You have to let me play,” Terrence said. “Louis says we have to share the balls.”

“Well, we’re not sharing with you,” said Allison.

“Oh, let him play,” said Rondi.

“All right,” said Allison. “We’ll play three-square. You better play right.”

“I will,” said Terrence.

Allison bounced the ball to Rondi. Rondi bounced it over to Terrence. Terrence caught it and kicked it over the fence.

“You have to go get it,” said Allison.

“Shut up, Dixie cup,” Terrence answered.

Rondi ran and told Louis.

D.J. and Dameon were playing basketball. “Uh-oh, here comes Terrence,” said Dameon.

“Hey, let me play,” said Terrence.

“Get lost, Terrence,” said Dameon.

“You have to share the balls. Louis says so,” said Terrence.

“Okay, but just throw it in the basket. Don’t kick it,” said Dameon.

“I won’t,” said Terrence.

First Dameon took a shot. It bounced off the backboard and through the hoop.

Next D.J. took a shot. He threw it underhand, way up in the air. It came down through the hoop without touching the rim.

Then Terrence took a shot. He kicked it over the fence.

“You idiot,” said Dameon.

“Take a train, peanut brain,” Terrence answered.

D.J. went and told Louis.

Stephen, Calvin, Joe, John, and Leslie were playing spud. Stephen was IT. Everyone else had a number. Stephen had to throw the ball up in the air and call out a number. The person who had that number had to try to catch it.

“Can I play?” asked Terrence.

“No,” said Calvin. “You’ll just kick the ball over the fence.”

“No,” said Joe.

“No way,” said John.

“No,” said Leslie.

“Sure,” said Stephen. “Newcomers are IT.” He gave the ball to Terrence. “Just throw the ball up in the air and call out a number between one and five.”

“Okay,” said Terrence.

The children formed a circle around Terrence.

“A million,” yelled Terrence as he kicked the ball over the fence.

“What did you do that for?” asked Stephen.

“Eat a frog, warthog,” said Terrence.

Stephen ran and told Louis.

Terrence looked around. There was nothing to do. There were no balls left.

Louis walked up to him. He was followed by Allison, Rondi, Dameon, D.J., Stephen, Calvin, Joe, John, and Leslie.

“What’s the matter, Terrence?” asked Louis.

“There are no balls,” said Terrence. “Do you have a green ball?”

“No,” said Louis. “All of my balls have mysteriously disappeared.”

“Darn it,” said Terrence. “There is nothing left to kick.”

“Nothing left to kick?” asked Louis. “Oh, I don’t know about that. What do you think, Rondi? Is there anything left to kick?”

Rondi thought a minute. Then she smiled. She was missing her two front teeth. “Yes, there is something left to kick,” she said.

“Well, where is it?” asked Terrence.

“Let me check with Allison,” said Louis. “Allison, is there anything left to kick?” He winked at her.

“There sure is,” said Allison.

“What, what?” asked Terrence.

“How about you, Dameon?” asked Louis. “Can you think of anything?”

Dameon nodded his head yes.

“Well, what is it?” asked Terrence. He couldn’t wait.

“D.J., we got anything around here to kick?” asked Louis.

D.J. smiled. “Yes, we do,” he said.

“Give it to me. Give it to me,” Terrence demanded.

“I don’t know if I should,” said Louis. “What do you think, Calvin? Should I give it to him?”

“I think you should,” said Calvin.

“You heard Calvin,” said Terrence. “Give it to me.”

“Not so fast,” said Louis. “Leslie, should I give it to him?”
“Oh, yes, I think he deserves it,” said Leslie.
“Give it to me. Give it to me,” Terrence repeated.
“Do you also think he deserves it, Joe?” asked Louis.
“Yes, I think so,” said Joe.
“What about you, John?” asked Louis.
“Definitely give it to him,” John answered.
“Come on. Come on,” said Terrence. “Recess is almost over.”
“We’ll leave it up to Stephen,” said Louis. “Whatever he says goes.”
“Let him have it,” said Stephen.
“You heard him, Louis,” said Terrence. “Let me have it.”
“Okay,” said Louis.
He picked Terrence up and kicked him over the fence.

27

Joy

Joy had forgotten her lunch at home. It was lunchtime. She was hungry.

She didn’t have a meal ticket. If she had had a meal ticket, she could have had a lunch from Miss Mush, the lunch teacher. She’d have to be

terribly hungry to eat a lunch made by Miss Mush. Even an empty brown paper sack would taste better. But that's how hungry Joy was.

Dameon hadn't forgotten his lunch. He had brought a lovely turkey sandwich, a big piece of chocolate cake, and a crisp, red apple. All he needed was a glass of milk. He could get that from Miss Mush. Miss Mush didn't know how to ruin milk.

Dameon left his lunch on his desk and went to the end of the milk line.

Joy didn't waste any time. She reached into Dameon's sack and took out the apple. But then she spotted the turkey sandwich. She put back the apple, took the sandwich, and noticed the chocolate cake. She put back the sandwich and took out the cake.

But then Joy had second thoughts. She put back the cake. Then she grabbed Dameon's whole lunch.

First she ate the sandwich. It was in a Baggie. When she finished the sandwich, she placed the Baggie on Jason's desk.

Next she ate the chocolate cake. It was wrapped in wax paper. She put the wax paper on Allison's desk.

She ate the apple last. She placed the apple core on Deedee's desk.

Then she put the empty sack on Calvin's desk.

Dameon returned with his glass of milk. "Mrs. Jewls, my lunch is gone!" he called.

"I wonder where it could be," said Mrs. Jewls.

"Calvin took it," said Joy. "There's the empty sack on his desk."

"Good work, Joy," said Mrs. Jewls. "Calvin, I'm ashamed of you. "She wrote Calvin's name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

"Look, the Baggie from Dameon's turkey sandwich is on Jason's desk!" Joy called.

"Very good, Joy," said Mrs. Jewls. "But how did you know that Dameon had a turkey sandwich?"

"I'm just smart," said Joy.

Mrs. Jewls wrote Jason's name on the blackboard under Calvin's.

"And there's the wax paper from the delicious chocolate cake on Allison's desk," Joy announced. Joy had chocolate all around her lips.

Allison stood firm. She looked into Mrs.Jewls's eyes. "I didn't eat his cake," she said.

"The evidence is there on your desk," said Mrs. Jewls. "Joy spotted it." She wrote Allison's name under Jason's.

“Dameon’s apple core is on Deedee’s desk,” said Joy.

“Very good, Joy,” said Mrs. Jewls. She wrote Deedee’s name under Allison’s.

“Dameon, I think you ought to thank Joy,” said Mrs. Jewls. “She solved the mystery.”

“Thank you, Joy,” said Dameon.

Just then, Louis, the yard teacher, walked in. “I have your lunch, Joy,” he said. “Your mother brought it. You left it at home.”

“You mean you didn’t have a lunch?” asked Mrs. Jewls. “You must be very hungry.”

“No,” said Joy, “not really. Since Dameon didn’t get to eat, he can have it.”

“Thanks a lot!” said Dameon. “You are the greatest!”

He ate Joy’s lunch, an old bologna sandwich and a dried-up carrot.

“Joy, for being such a good detective, and for being so generous with your lunch, you may help yourself to a Tootsie Roll pop,” said Mrs. Jewls. “They are in the coffee can on top of my desk.”

Joy took one. Then, when Mrs. Jewls wasn’t looking, she took another.

Calvin, Jason, Allison, and Deedee had their names on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE. But they were good the rest of the day, so at two o’clock Mrs. Jewls erased them.

They forgot all about the whole thing.

Dameon had a lousy lunch instead of a great lunch. But five minutes later it didn’t make any difference. He couldn’t taste it anymore, and he was full. He went outside to play basketball and forgot about the whole thing.

Joy had a great lunch and two Tootsie Roll pops. But five minutes later it didn’t make any difference. She couldn’t taste it anymore, and she was full. And at dinnertime she was hungry, just the same.

But a horrible thing happened. Joy couldn’t forget about filching Dameon’s lunch. And for the rest of the year, every turkey sandwich, piece of chocolate cake, apple, and Tootsie Roll pop tasted like Miss Mush’s porridge.

28

Nancy

Nancy had big hands and big feet. He didn’t like his name. He thought it was a girl’s name.

None of the other children in Mrs. Jewls's class thought that Nancy's name was odd. They didn't think of it as a girl's name or as a boy's name. Nancy was just the name of the quiet kid with the big hands and feet who sat over there in the corner next to John.

Nancy was very quiet and shy. He was ashamed of his name. He had only one friend, a girl who went to class on the twenty-third story of Wayside School.

They were friends for a good reason. He didn't know her name, and she didn't know his. They just called each other "Hey, you," or just plain "You."

Nancy was afraid to ask his friend what her name was because then he might have to tell her his name. He never could figure out why she never asked. But he was happy just to leave well enough alone.

One morning, Nancy and his friend were late. When they got to the twenty-third story, his friend's teacher was waiting outside.

"Hurry up. You're late, Mac," said the teacher.

Nancy's friend turned red. She didn't move.

"Come on, Mac, shake a leg. Get the lead out," said the teacher.

"Your name is Mac!" said Nancy.

Mac was very pretty. She had red hair and freckles. She covered her face and ran into the room.

"My name is Nancy!" Nancy called after her.

Mac stepped back outside. "I was ashamed to tell you my name," she said.

"Me, too," said Nancy. "Nancy's a girl's name."

"Oh, I think it's cute," said Mac.

"I like the name Mac," said Nancy.

"Mac is a boy's name," said Mac.

"My mother has a rich aunt named Nancy," said Nancy. "That's why she gave me the name."

"My mother once had a dog named Mac," said Mac.

"Hey, do you want to trade?" Nancy asked.

"Can we?" asked Mac.

"I don't see why not," said Nancy.

"Okay," said Mac.

They both spun around one hundred times in opposite directions until they were so dizzy that they fell over. When they stood up, Mac was

Nancy and Nancy was Mac.

They said good-bye. Then Mac raced up to Mrs. Jewls's room. He was no longer shy.

"Hi, everybody. My name's Mac," he announced. "I traded names." He held out his big hand.

Todd jumped up and shook it. "Hi, Mac," he said. "Glad to meet you."

"How you doin', Mac," said Ron.

"Howdy, Mac," said Terrence.

"Nice to see you, Mac," said Bebe.

"You traded names?" asked Jason. Jason didn't like his name, either.

"That's right, Jason, old boy," said Mac.

"Is that allowed?" asked Jason.

"Why not!" said Mac.

"Hey, anybody want to trade?" Jason called.

"I'll trade with you," said Terrence. He didn't like his name, either.

"Wait. I'll trade with you, Terrence," said Maurecia. Maurecia didn't like her name.

"No. He's trading with me," said Jason.

"I'll trade with you, Maurecia," said Dameon.

"No, thanks," said Maurecia.

"I'll trade with you, Dameon," said Mrs. Jewls.

"No, I want to be Mrs. Jewls," said Stephen.

It turned out that nobody in Mrs. Jewls's class liked his name. The children all spun around in different directions until they got so dizzy that they fell over. And when they stood up again, nobody knew who anybody was.

"What are we going to do, Mrs. Jewls?" asked Leslie, who was really Eric Bacon.

"My name is not Mrs. Jewls. It's Maurecia," answered Terrence, who was really Jason.

"It is not. I'm Maurecia," said Deedee, who was really Joe.

"You're both wrong," said Maurecia. "I'm Mrs. Jewls."

This went on for an hour. At last they figured out who the real Rondi was. She was missing her two front teeth. After they figured out Rondi, they were able to get Allison pretty easily. And then from there they got D.J., Dameon, and Mrs. Jewls. She was the oldest one.

Eventually they figured out who everybody really was. They had some difficulty deciding which Eric was which, and actually they are still not absolutely sure.

Everybody just decided to keep his own name. The children didn't like them, but it made things much easier.

Mac and Nancy kept their new names. But when they were together they still called each other "Hey, you," or just plain "You."

29

Stephen

Stephen had green hair. He had purple ears and a blue face. He wore his sister's pink dancing shoes and green leotards. The leotards matched his hair. He was all dressed up as a goblin for Mrs. Jewls's Halloween party.

But unfortunately it wasn't Halloween.

"Ha, ha, ha, you sure look stupid," said Jason. Jason was Stephen's best friend.

"So do you," said Stephen.

"Boy, are you dumb," said Jenny. "Halloween is on Sunday. Today is only Friday."

"You're the one who's dumb," said Stephen. "Ha, ha, you'd probably come to school on Sunday. Mrs. Jewls said we'd have the party today."

But none of the other children wore costumes, only Stephen.

"All right, class," said Mrs. Jewls. "It is time for our Halloween party."

"See," said Stephen.

Mrs. Jewls gave each child a cookie that looked like an orange witch with a black hat. She laughed when she saw Stephen and forgot to give him one. Stephen didn't ask for it. He was afraid that she'd laugh again.

The children finished their cookies in less than thirty seconds.

"All right, class," said Mrs. Jewls. "The party is over. We have a lot of work to do."

Stephen felt like a fool. The party lasted less than a minute. And he had to spend the rest of the day wearing his stupid goblin suit.

"Look, Stephen's wearing his sister's leotards," laughed Dana.

"They're green, just like his hair," said "Fatso."

Everybody laughed.

Mrs. Jewls began the arithmetic lesson. She wrote on the blackboard. "Two plus two equals five."

"That's wrong!" Joy shouted.

Mrs. Jewls tried again. "Two plus two equals three."

That wasn't right, either. She added two and two again and got forty-three. It was useless. No matter how hard she tried, she could not get two plus two to equal four.

"I don't understand it," she said. "They've always equaled four before."

Suddenly she screamed. The chalk turned into a squiggling worm! She dropped it on her foot.

Then all the lights went out, and the blackboard lit up like a movie screen.

A woman appeared on the screen. She had a long tongue and pointed ears. She stepped off the screen and into the classroom.

It was the ghost of Mrs. Gorf.

Mrs. Gorf ran her fingernails across the blackboard. “Trick or treat, you rotten kids,” she said. “Now I’ll get even with every last one of you. Where’s Todd?”

“Who is that?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Mrs. Gorf,” said Dameon.

“Who’s Mrs. Gorf?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“She was the meanest teacher we ever had,” said Rondi.

“What happened to her?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Louis ate her,” said Jason.

“Well, I’m not going to allow this,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Get out of my classroom!” she demanded.

“It’s Halloween, sweet teacher,” said Mrs. Gorf. “Ghosts can go anywhere they like. I’ve come for a little class reunion.”

“But it isn’t Halloween,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Halloween is still two days away.”

“I know,” said Mrs. Gorf, “but Halloween falls on a Sunday this year, so we are celebrating it on the Friday before.”

Stephen leaped up from his seat. “See, I was right,” he said. “Today is the day we celebrate it, the Friday before! Mrs. Gorf proved it.”

He ran up to Mrs. Gorf. “They all laughed at me and made me feel stupid because I was the only one who got dressed up. But they were the ones who were wrong. You and I are right.”

He put his arms around Mrs. Gorf and hugged her.

Mrs. Gorf gasped and disappeared.

The lights came back on.

Mrs. Jewls picked up the piece of chalk from the floor. She wrote on the blackboard, “Two plus two equals four.”

“That’s good,” she said. “When two plus two doesn’t equal four, anything can happen.”

All the children who had laughed at Stephen now called him a hero. But they told him to change out of his stupid costume.

So at lunch, Stephen went home, washed up, and changed. He came back wearing blue jeans and a polo shirt. Of course, his hair was still green. It always was.

30

Louis

Louis had a red face and a mustache of many colors. He was the yard teacher at Wayside School. It was his job to see that the children didn't have too much fun during lunch and recess.

And if you haven't already guessed, he is the one who wrote this book.

On June tenth there was a blizzard. Louis was afraid that the children would have too much fun, so nobody was allowed outside.

"Class," said Mrs. Jewls. "After you finish your lunch today, come back up to the classroom. You are not allowed outside."

The children all went to the lunchroom. Miss Mush had made Tuna Surprise. They looked at it, then hurried back up the stairs.

There was nothing to do.

"Now, class," said Mrs. Jewls, "I know that you are all bored, but I have a special surprise for you."

"I hope it's better than the Tuna Surprise," said Maurecia.

Mrs. Jewls continued, "Louis is going to come up and entertain us. He will tell us a story. Now I want you all to be on your best behavior."

When Louis walked in, all the children booed.

"Are you going to tell us a story?" asked Bebe.

"Yes," said Louis.

"Well, it better be good," Bebe warned.

"It better be better than the Tuna Surprise," said "Butterfingers."

"I thought the Tuna Surprise was good," said Louis.

"You'd eat dirt if they put enough ketchup on it," said Mac.

"Hey, everybody, be quiet," said Todd. "Let him tell the story."

"Not too loud, Louis," said Sharie. "I'm trying to get some sleep."

Louis sat in the middle of the room, and all the children gathered around.

Louis began his story. "This is a story about a school very much like this one. But before we get started, there is something you ought to know so that you don't get confused. In this school every classroom is on the same story."

"Which one, the eighteenth?" asked Jenny.

"No, said Louis. "They are all on the ground. The school is only one story high."

"Not much of a school," laughed Dameon.

Louis continued. "Now you might think the children there are strange and silly. That is probably true. However, when I told them stories about

you, they thought that you were strange and silly."

"US?" the children answered. "How are we strange?"

"I'm normal," said Stephen. "Aren't I?"

"As normal as I am," Joe assured him.

"The children at that school must be crazy," said Leslie.

"Real lulus," Maurecia agreed.

"Tell us about them, Louis," Bebe demanded.

"For one thing," Louis said, "none of these children has ever been turned into an apple."

"That's silly," said Deedee. "Everybody's been turned into an apple. It's part of growing up."

Louis continued. "Dead rats don't walk into classrooms wearing raincoats."

"What do they wear, tuxedos?" asked Todd.

"And girls never try to sell their toes," Louis added.

"Well, no wonder," said Leslie, "at today's prices."

Louis continued. "They don't trade names or read upside down. They can't turn mosquito bites into numbers. They don't count the hairs on their heads. The walls don't laugh, and two plus two always equals four."

"How horrible," said Dameon.

"That's not the worst of it," said Louis. "They have never tasted Maurecia-flavored ice cream."

A hush fell over the classroom.

"Mrs. Jewls, I'm scared," said Allison. "Is there really a school like that?"

"Of course not," said Mrs. Jewls. "Louis was just telling a story."

"It was a good story," said Leslie.

"I thought it was stupid," said Kathy.

"I liked it," said Rondi. "It was funny."

Mrs. Jewls said, "Louis, it was a very entertaining story. But we don't really go in for fairy tales here. I'm trying to teach my class the truth."

"That's all right," said Louis. "I have to go down to room twenty-nine now and tell them a story." He started out the door.

"Class," said Mrs. Jewls. "Let's all thank Louis for his wonderful story."

Everybody booed.

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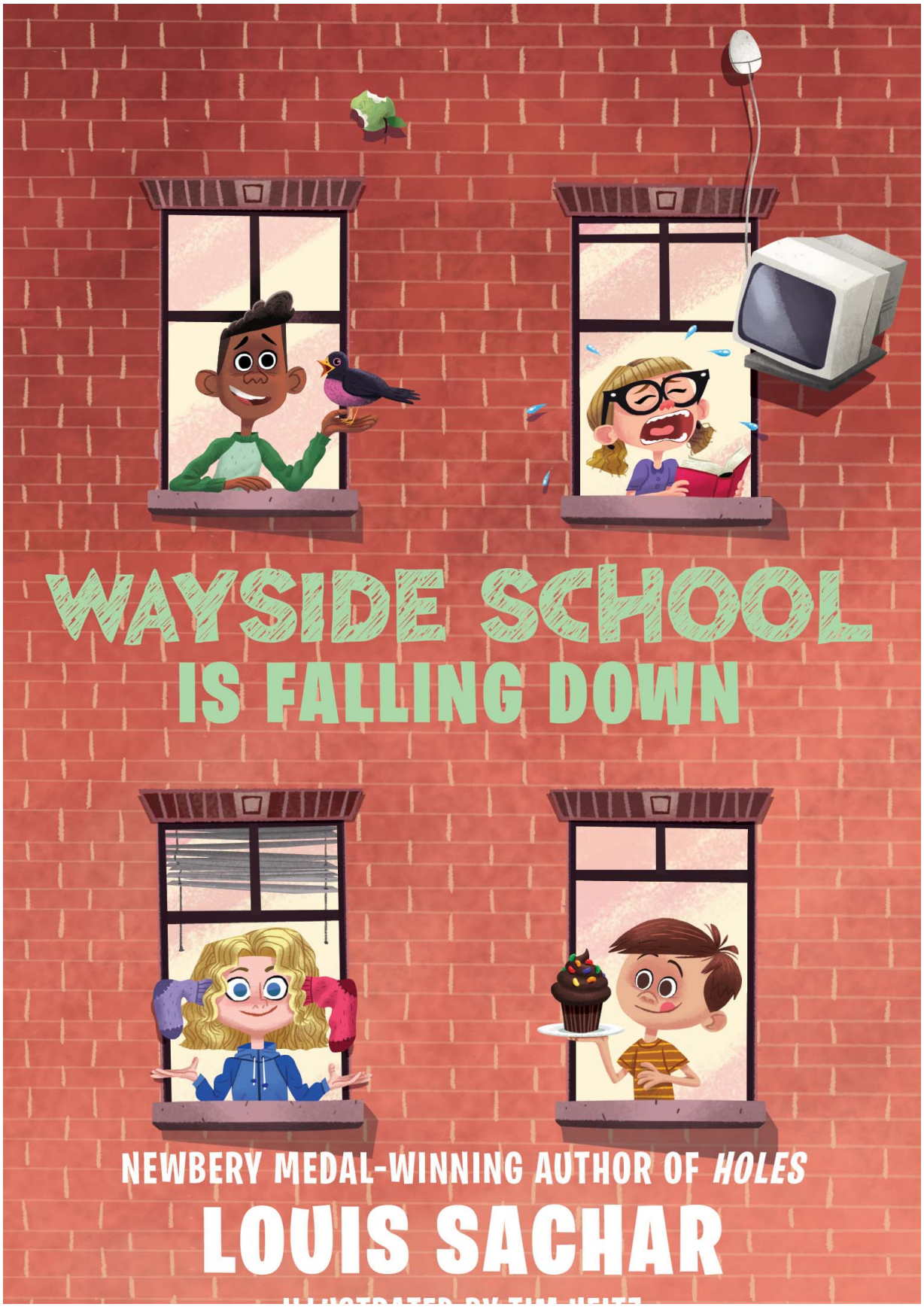
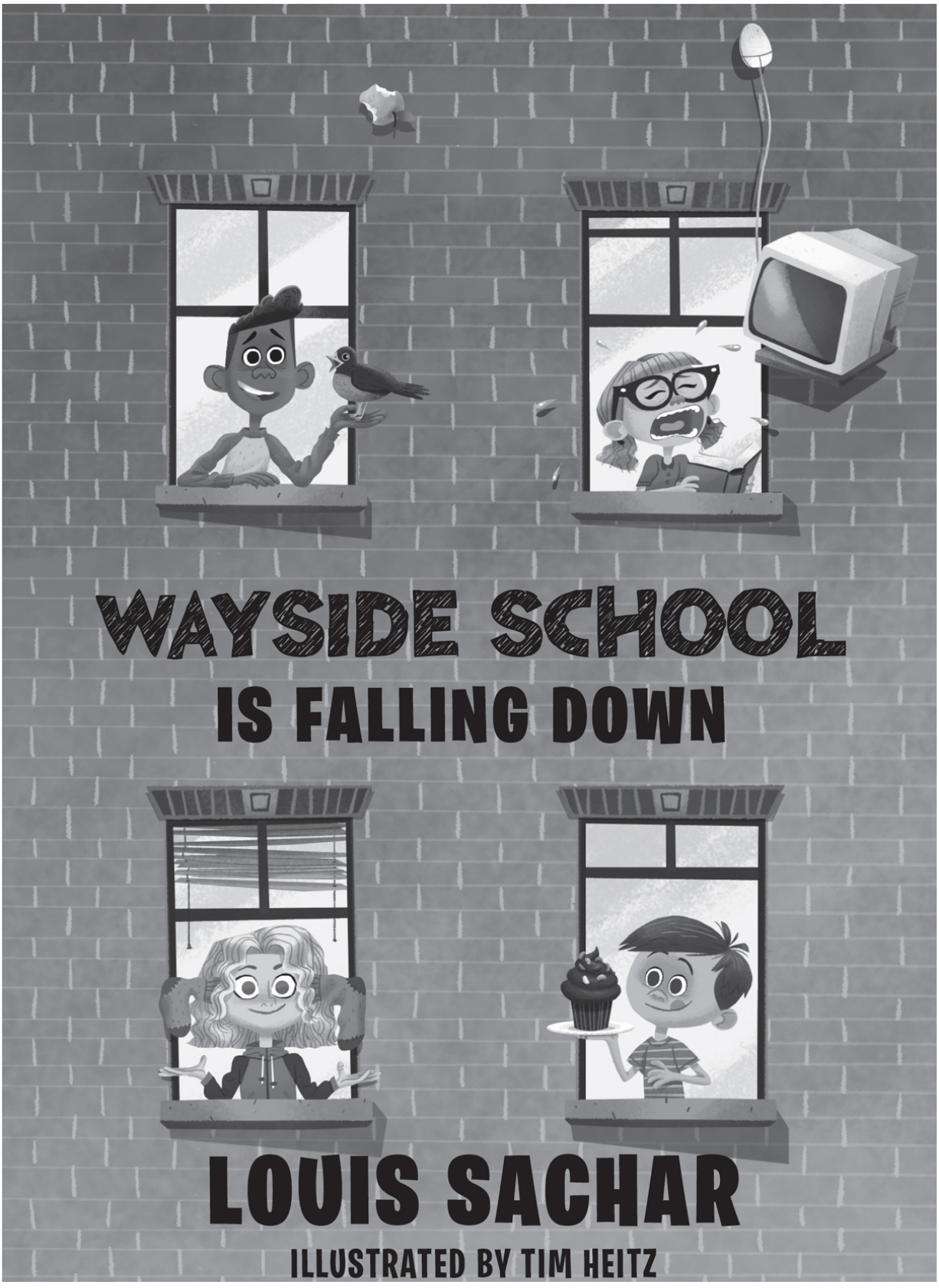

WAYSIDE SCHOOL
IS FALLING DOWN
NEWBERY MEDAL-WINNING AUTHOR OF *HOLES*
LOUIS SACHAR

ILLUSTRATED BY TIM HEITZ



WAYSIDE SCHOOL IS FALLING DOWN

LOUIS SACHAR

ILLUSTRATED BY TIM HEITZ

HARPER
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Dedication

To Emily, Walker, Annie, Bill, Bobbie, and Corky

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Copyright

1

A Package for Mrs. Jewls

Louis, the yard teacher, frowned.

The school yard was a mess. There were pencils and pieces of paper everywhere. How'd all this junk get here? he wondered. Well, I'm not going to pick it up!

It wasn't his job to pick up garbage. He was just supposed to pass out the balls during lunch and recess, and also make sure the kids didn't kill each other.

He sighed, then began cleaning it up. He loved all the children at Wayside School. He didn't want them playing on a dirty playground.

As he was picking up the pencils and pieces of paper, a large truck drove into the parking lot. It honked its horn twice, then twice more.

Louis ran to the truck. "Quiet!" he whispered. "Children are trying to learn in there!" He pointed at the school.

A short man with big, bushy hair stepped out of the truck. "I have a package for somebody named Mrs. Jewls," he said.

"I'll take it," said Louis.

"Are you Mrs. Jewls?" asked the man.

"No," said Louis.

"I have to give it to Mrs. Jewls," said the man.

Louis thought a moment. He didn't want the man disturbing the children. He knew how much they hated to be interrupted when they were working.

"I'm Mrs. Jewls," he said.

"But you just said you weren't Mrs. Jewls," said the man.

"I changed my mind," said Louis.

The man got the package out of the back of the truck and gave it to Louis. "Here you go, Mrs. Jewls," he said.

"Uhh!" Louis grunted. It was a very heavy package. The word FRAGILE was printed on every side. He had to be careful not to drop it.

The package was so big, Louis couldn't see where he was going. Fortunately, he knew the way to Mrs. Jewls's class by heart. It was straight up.

Wayside School was thirty stories high, with only one room on each story. Mrs. Jewls's class was at the very top. It was Louis's favorite class.

He pushed through the door to the school, then started up the stairs. There was no elevator.

There were stairs that led down to the basement, too, but nobody ever went down there. There were dead rats living in the basement.

The box was pressed against Louis's face, squashing his nose. Even so, when he reached the fifteenth floor, he could smell Miss Mush cooking in the cafeteria. It smelled like she was making mushrooms. Maybe on my way back I'll stop by Miss Mush's room and get some mushrooms, he thought. He didn't want to miss Miss Mush's mushrooms. They were her specialty.

He huffed and groaned and continued up the stairs. His arms and legs were very sore, but he didn't want to rest. This package might be important, he thought. I have to get it to Mrs. Jewls right away.

He stepped easily from the eighteenth story to the twentieth. There was no nineteenth story.

Miss Zarves taught the class on the nineteenth story. There was no Miss Zarves.

At last he struggled up the final step to the thirtieth story. He knocked on Mrs. Jewls's door with his head.

Mrs. Jewls was in the middle of teaching her class about gravity when she heard the knock. "Come in," she called.

"I can't open the door," Louis gasped. "My hands are full. I have a package for you."

Mrs. Jewls faced the class. "Who wants to open the door for Louis?" she asked.

All the children raised their hands. They loved to be interrupted when they were working.

"Oh dear, how shall I choose?" asked Mrs. Jewls. "I have to be fair about this. I know! Well have a spelling bee. And the winner will get to open the door."

Louis knocked his head against the door again. "It's heavy," he complained. "And I'm very tired."

"Just a second," Mrs. Jewls called back. "Allison, the first word's for you. Heavy."

"Heavy," said Allison. "H-E-A-V-Y. Heavy."

"Very good. Jason, you're next. Tired."

"Tired," said Jason. "S-L-E-E-P-Y. Tired."

Louis felt the package slipping from his sweaty fingers. He shifted his weight to get a better grip. The corners of the box dug into the sides of his

arms. He felt his hands go numb.

Actually, he *didn't* feel them go numb.

"Jenny, package."

"Package," said Jenny. "B-O-X. Package."

"Excellent!" said Mrs. Jewls.

Louis felt like he was going to faint.

At last John opened the door. "I won the spelling bee, Louis!" he said.

"Very good, John," muttered Louis.

"Aren't you going to shake my hand?" asked John.

Louis shifted the box to one arm, quickly shook John's hand, then grabbed the box again and staggered into the room.

"Where do you want it, Mrs. Jewls?" he asked.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Jewls. "What is it?"

"I don't know," said Louis. "I'll have to put it down someplace so you can open it."

"But how can I tell you where to put it until I know what it is?" asked Mrs. Jewls. "You might put it in the wrong place."

So Louis held the box as Mrs. Jewls stood on a chair next to him and tore open the top. His legs wobbled beneath him.

"It's a computer!" exclaimed Mrs. Jewls.

Everybody booed.

"What's the matter?" asked Louis. "I thought everyone loved computers."

"We don't want it, Louis," said Eric Bacon.

"Take it back, Jack," said Terrence.

"Get that piece of junk out of here," said Maurecia.

"Now, don't be that way," said Mrs. Jewls.

"The computer will help us learn. It's a lot quicker than a pencil and paper."

"But the quicker we learn, the more work we have to do," complained Todd.

"You may set it over there on the counter, Louis," said Mrs. Jewls.

Louis set the computer on the counter next to Sharie's desk. Then he collapsed on the floor.

"Now watch closely," said Mrs. Jewls.

Everyone gathered around the new computer. It had a full-color monitor and two disk drives.

Mrs. Jewls pushed it out the window.

They all watched it fall and smash against the sidewalk.

“See?” said Mrs. Jewls. “That’s gravity.”

“Oh, now I get it!” said Joe.

“Thank you, Louis,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I’ve been trying to teach them about gravity all morning. We had been using pencils and pieces of paper, but the computer was a lot quicker.”

2

Mark Miller

Mrs. Jewls rang her cowbell. “I would like you to meet Mark Miller,” she said. “He and his family just moved here all the way from Magadonia!”

Everybody stared at the new kid.

He stood at the front of the room. His knees were shaking.

He hated having to stand in front of the class. It was as if Mrs. Jewls had brought him in for show-and-tell. He felt like some kind of weirdo. He just wanted to sit at a desk and be like everybody else.

But worst of all, his name wasn’t Mark Miller.

He was Benjamin Nushmutt. And he had moved from Hempleton, not Magadonia.

But he was too scared to mention that to Mrs. Jewls. He was afraid to correct a teacher.

“Why don’t you tell the class a little bit about yourself, Mark?” suggested Mrs. Jewls.

Benjamin didn’t know what to say. He wished he really was Mark Miller. Mark Miller wouldn’t be scared, he thought. He’d probably have lots to say. Everyone would like him. Nobody would think Mark Miller was weird.

“Well, I guess we’d better find you a place to sit,” said Mrs. Jewls.

She put him at the empty desk between Todd and Bebe.

“Hi, Mark,” said Todd. “I’m Todd. You’ll like Mrs. Jewls. She’s the nicest teacher in the school.”

“Todd, no talking,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Go write your name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.”

“Hi, Mark,” said Bebe. “I’m Bebe Gunn.”

“Hi,” Benjamin said quietly.

He decided he’d have to tell Mrs. Jewls his real name at recess. He cringed. He didn’t know why, but for some reason he had trouble saying his own name.

“And what’s your name, little boy?” an adult would ask him.

“Benjamin Nushmutt,” he’d answer.

“What?”

“BENjamin NUSHmutt.”

“What?”

“Ben-Ja-Min Nush-Mutt.”

“What?”

“BenjaMIN NushMUTT!”

“What?”

“Benjamin Nushmutt.”

“Oh, nice to meet you, Benjamin.”

He never knew what it was that made the person suddenly understand.

When the bell rang for recess, everyone charged out of the room. Benjamin slowly walked to Mrs. Jewls’s desk. Somehow, he had to tell her.

Mrs. Jewls was sorting papers. “Oh, hello, Mark,” she said. “How are you enjoying the class so far?”

“Fine,” said Benjamin.

“Good, I’m glad to hear that,” said Mrs. Jewls.

Benjamin shrugged, then walked out of the room. If I had told her my name, she would have thought I was weird for not telling her sooner, he realized.

He stood at the top of the stairs and looked down. Recess was only ten minutes long. It didn’t seem worth it to go all the way down and then come all the way back up. He didn’t have any friends down there anyway.

He had never been more unhappy in his whole life.

He sat on the top step. “Mark Miller,” he said out loud. It was an easy name to say. Mark Miller probably would have made lots of friends by now, he thought.

Suddenly he heard a low rumble. Then the stairs began to shake. It felt like an earthquake! This whole stupid school is going to fall over, he thought. He put his head between his knees.

The rumbling got worse. I’m going to die and nobody will even know who I am, he worried. The new kid. Mark Miller. The weirdo!

But it wasn’t an earthquake. It was just all the kids running back up the stairs.

“Hey, Mark, why are you sitting that way?” asked Deedee.

“You look funny,” said Ron.

Benjamin looked up.

“How come you weren’t at recess?” asked Jason. “We looked everywhere for you.”

“Couldn’t you find the playground?” asked Calvin.

“It’s just straight down,” said Bebe. “You can’t miss it.”

“But don’t go in the basement,” warned Sharie. “Whatever you do, don’t go in the basement.”

“We’ll go down together at lunch,” said Todd. “That way you won’t get lost.”

Benjamin smiled. He was glad everyone seemed to like him. Or at least they liked Mark Miller. He wondered if they’d like Benjamin Nushmutt too.

“The bell has rung!” said Mrs. Jewls, standing in the doorway. “Now, everyone get inside.” She made Todd put a check next to his name on the board for being late.

Mrs. Jewls handed a stack of work sheets to Dameon and asked him to pass them out to the rest of the class.

Benjamin looked at his work sheet. At the top right corner there was a place to put his name. He didn’t know which name to put there, Mark Miller or Benjamin Nushmutt.

He left it blank and started working on the first problem.

Louis, the yard teacher, entered the room carrying a white paper sack. “Benjamin forgot his lunch,” he said. “His mother just brought it.”

“Who?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Benjamin,” said Louis.

“There’s no Benjamin in my class,” said Mrs. Jewls.

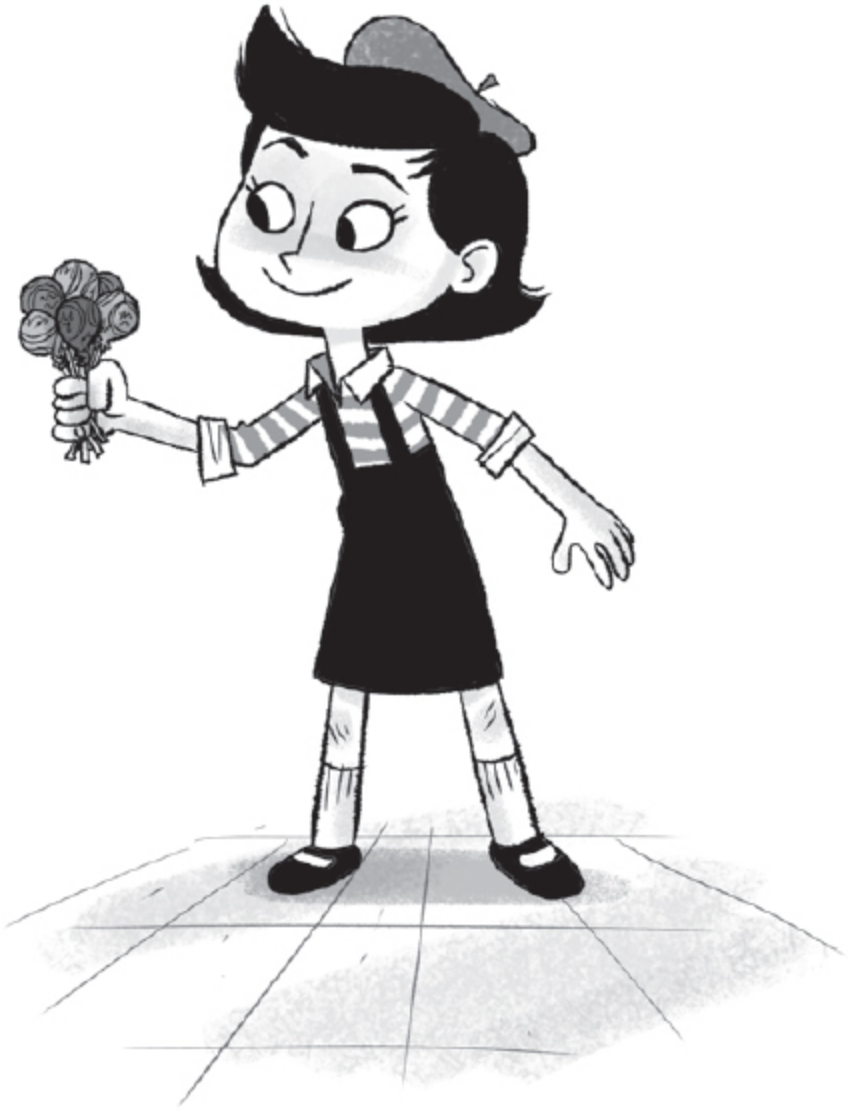
“Are you sure?” asked Louis. “It looks like a good lunch.”

“I know the names of the children in my class!” Mrs. Jewls said indignantly.

“Well, I’ll just leave it here until I figure this out,” said Louis. He left the lunch on Mrs. Jewls’s desk and walked out of the room.

Benjamin frowned. He looked at the white paper sack on Mrs. Jewls’s desk. He couldn’t tell Mrs. Jewls his real name now. She’d think he was making it up just to get a free lunch.

He wrote *Mark Miller* at the top of his work sheet. But one of these days, he knew, he’d have to tell her his real name.



3

Bebe’s Baby Brother

Mrs. Jewls asked Dameon to pass back the homework.

Bebe Gunn waited nervously. Except for art, her grades had not been very good lately. If she didn’t start bringing home better grades, her

parents said they wouldn't let her stay up past midnight. She did her best artwork after midnight.

Dameon handed Calvin his homework, then Todd, then Joy.

"Where's yours?" asked Calvin.

"I don't know," said Bebe.

"Did you do it?" asked Calvin.

"Yes, I did it," said Bebe. "I worked extra hard on it! I hope Mrs. Jewls didn't lose it."

Dameon finished passing out the homework. Bebe never got hers.

"Bebe, will you come here, please," said Mrs. Jewls.

She pushed out of her seat, stood up, and nervously walked to Mrs. Jewls's desk. "I did my homework, Mrs. Jewls," she said. "Really!"

"Yes, I know," said Mrs. Jewls. She held Bebe's homework in her hand.

"Whew!" Bebe sighed with relief. "I was afraid you lost it!"

"No, I didn't lose it," Mrs. Jewls said sternly. She showed the back of the paper to Bebe. Someone had written:

MRS. JEWLS IS AS FAT AS A HIPPOPOTAMUS!
(AND SHE SMELLS LIKE ONE, TOO.)

"I didn't write that!" exclaimed Bebe. "I love the way you smell."

Mrs. Jewls smiled. "But if you didn't write it, who did?"

"Ray!" Bebe instantly replied.

"Who's Ray?"

"He's my little brother. Ray Gunn. He must have snuck into my room after I was asleep. He's always playing mean tricks on me. He knew how hard I worked on my homework."

"Well, we'll show Ray," said Mrs. Jewls. She gave Bebe an A plus. "There. I don't think he'll try that again."

"Thanks!" said Bebe.

"You may have a Tootsie Roll Pop, too," said Mrs. Jewls.

Bebe took a Tootsie Roll Pop out of the coffee can on Mrs. Jewls's desk, then returned to her seat. She proudly showed Calvin her A+.

The next day Mrs. Jewls asked Dameon to hand back another batch of homework.

"How come Dameon always gets to do everything?" griped Kathy.

“I’m sorry, Kathy,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Would you like to pass back the homework?”

“No!” grumped Kathy. “I’m not your slave.”

Dameon passed out the homework. Again Bebe didn’t get hers.

Mrs. Jewls called her to her desk. On the back of her homework someone had written:

MRS. JEWLS HAS A HEAD FULL OF OATMEAL!
(AND IT LEAKS OUT HER EARS.)

“I didn’t write it,” said Bebe.

“Ray?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

Bebe nodded.

“Why don’t you start checking the back of your homework?” suggested Mrs. Jewls.

“I did when I woke up!” said Bebe. “He must have done it after breakfast, while I was brushing my teeth. We had oatmeal for breakfast.” She shook her head. “I won’t brush my teeth anymore!”

“You have to brush your teeth,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“My parents think he’s such a little angel!” Bebe complained. “He’s always wrecking things, and then I’m always the one who gets in trouble. ‘Why can’t you be more like Ray?’ they say. Yesterday he threw all my underwear out the window. Then my mother yelled at me for it. She wouldn’t believe that her little darling son would do something like that!”

Mrs. Jewls gave Bebe another A+ and another Tootsie Roll Pop.

For Friday everyone had to write a report and read it to the class. Bebe wrote her report about George Washington. She stood at the front of the room and read it out loud.

“. . . George Washington never told a lie. Not like Mrs. Jewls. She lies all the time. That’s why her nose is so big. And she snores when she sleeps, so Mister Jewls has to wear ear plugs.”

Everyone was laughing.

Bebe stopped reading. “What’s so funny?” she asked.

“Come here,” said Mrs. Jewls.

Bebe shrugged, then walked to Mrs. Jewls’s desk.

Mrs. Jewls showed her what she had just read.

“Did I just read that out loud?” Bebe asked.

Mrs. Jewls nodded.

“I was just reading it,” Bebe explained. “I wasn’t listening.”

“It was Ray again, wasn’t it?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Had to be,” said Bebe. “Yesterday he put toothpaste in my socks. Then my mother got mad at me for making a mess and wasting toothpaste.”

Bebe got an A+ on her report and another Tootsie Roll Pop.

After school Mrs. Jewls called Bebe’s mother on the phone. “Hello, Mrs. Gunn. This is Mrs. Jewls from Wayside School.”

“What’s Bebe done now?” asked Mrs. Gunn.

“Bebe hasn’t done anything wrong,” said Mrs. Jewls. “She’s a wonderful girl.”

“Well, that’s a surprise!” said Mrs. Gunn. “She’s always causing trouble at home.”

“I wanted to talk to you about that,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I think you’re being unfair to Bebe. I think she often gets into trouble when really Ray is to blame.”

“Ray?” asked Mrs. Gunn.

“Yes. I know you think he’s a perfect angel,” said Mrs. Jewls, “but some children can be angels on the outside and devils underneath.”

“Yes, that sounds like Bebe,” said Mrs. Gunn.

“I’m not talking about Bebe. I’m talking about Ray.”

“Ray?” asked Bebe’s mother. “Who’s Ray?”

4

Homework

Mrs. Jewls was teaching the class about fractions and decimals. She explained that .5 was the same as 1/2.

Mac raised his hand.

Mrs. Jewls pretended not to see him.

“Oooh! Oooh!” Mac groaned as he stretched his hand so high that it hurt.

Mrs. Jewls pretended not to hear him.

Jenny raised her hand.

“Yes, Jenny?” said Mrs. Jewls, glad to call on anyone besides Mac.

“Mac has his hand raised,” said Jenny.

“Um, thank you, Jenny,” muttered Mrs. Jewls. “Yes, Mac, what is it?”

“I couldn’t find one of my socks this morning,” said Mac. “Man, I looked everywhere! In my closet, in the bathroom, in the kitchen, but I just couldn’t find it! I asked my mother, but she hadn’t seen it either.”

“That’s very interesting, Mac,” Mrs. Jewls said patiently, “but what does that have to do with decimals?”

“Because,” said Mac, “I only could find *half* of my socks!”

“Oh. Right,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Does anybody else have any questions about decimals? Yes, John?”

“Did you look under the bed?” asked John.

“That was one of the first places I looked,” said Mac, “but it wasn’t there.”

“Did you check the dirty clothes?” asked Ron. “Maybe it was never washed.”

“I checked,” said Mac.

“Do you have a dog?” asked Bebe. “Maybe your dog took it.”

“No, my dog doesn’t wear socks,” said Mac.

“Why didn’t you just put on a different sock?” asked Allison. “Even if it didn’t match?”

“I thought of that,” said Mac. “See, but then if I wore a sock that didn’t match, I’d be left with only one sock of that color for tomorrow. And then if I wore that sock, I’d have to wear a sock that didn’t match with it. And so on for the rest of my life! I would never wear matching socks again.”

“Well, be that as it may,” said Mrs. Jewls, “we really need to get back to decimals. Yes, Stephen?”

“Once I had both my socks on,” said Stephen, “but I wasn’t wearing any shoes. My mom had just waxed the floor, too. I slid all around on it like I was skating. It was a lot of fun until I fell against the kitchen table and broke two dishes. Then I got in trouble.”

“What’s *that* got to do with *my* socks?” Mac asked impatiently.

Stephen shrugged.

“Did you ever find your other sock?” asked Leslie.

“Yep,” said Mac, “but you’ll never guess where. In the refrigerator!” He held out his arms in bewilderment. “How did it get there?”

No one knew.

“See, here it is,” said Mac. He climbed on top of his desk so everyone could see his feet. He pointed to his left foot and said, “This is the sock I had from the beginning.” He pointed to his right foot and said, “And this is the sock I couldn’t find.”

His socks were red with gold lightning bolts down the side.

“Ooh, hot socks!” said Maurecia.

“No, it was cold after being in the refrigerator,” said Mac, still standing on top of his desk. “I made it up a song, too, while I was looking for it. You want to hear it?”

He sang:

“I got one sock!
Lookin’ for the other.
One sock!
Lookin’ for its brother.
When I find that sock!
I’ll tell you what I’ll do.
I’ll put it on my foot,
and I’ll stick it in my shoe!”

The bell rang for recess.

“Since we didn’t finish the arithmetic lesson,” said Mrs. Jewls, “you’ll have to do the rest of it for homework.”

All the kids groaned as they headed outside.

After recess was science. Mrs. Jewls was teaching the class about dinosaurs. She told the class that there were two types of dinosaurs; those that ate meat, and those that ate only vegetables.

“You mean like broccoli?” asked Rondi.

“I don’t think they had broccoli back then,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Just as there were different kinds of animals back then, there were also different kinds of vegetables.”

Mac raised his hand.

Mrs. Jewls pretended not to see him.

“Ooh! Ooh!” Mac groaned. He looked like he was going to explode.

Mrs. Jewls pretended not to hear him. She called on Myron.

“Mac has his hand raised,” said Myron.

“Um, thank you, Myron,” muttered Mrs. Jewls. “Yes, Mac?”

“My uncle grew the biggest watermelon you ever saw in your whole life. Man, it was huge! It was so heavy I couldn’t even lift it.”

“Mac, what does this have to do with dinosaurs?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Because that must have been the kind of watermelon that dinosaurs ate,” said Mac.

“Did you eat it?” asked D. J.

“Not all of it,” said Mac, shaking his head. “Whew, it was too big for me, and I love watermelon!”

“What did it taste like?” asked Maurecia.

“Delicious!” said Mac. “But lots of seeds. You shouldn’t eat the seeds. Otherwise a watermelon might grow inside your stomach. I once heard about a lady who was so fat that everyone thought she was going to have a baby. But she didn’t have a baby. She had a watermelon!”

“Was it a boy or a girl?” asked Joy.

Everyone laughed.

Mrs. Jewls never finished her lesson about dinosaurs, so she had to assign it for homework.

After school Mac walked home with his girlfriend, Nancy. Nancy’s class was on the twenty-third floor of Wayside.

Mac carried his arithmetic book, his science book, his reading book, his language book, and his spelling book.

Nancy didn’t have any books. “I’ll carry your books for you, Mac,” she offered.

Mac gave Nancy his books. “Don’t you have any homework?” he asked.

She shook her head.

“Man, it’s unfair,” said Mac. “Mrs. Jewls assigns more homework than any other teacher in Wayside School.”

5

Another Story About Socks

Sharie brought a hobo to school for show-and-tell.

They stood side by side at the front of the room.

"This is a hobo," said Sharie. "I found him on the way to school."

“Ooh, how neat!” said Maurecia.

The hobo had long dirty hair and a scraggly beard. His shirt was covered with stains. His pants had lots of colorful patches. His coat was too big for him, but it wasn’t as big as Sharie’s coat.

Sharie was a little girl, but she wore the biggest coat in all of Wayside School.

The hobo wore old black shoes that also looked like they were too big for him, but that might have been because he wasn’t wearing any socks.

“Tell the class something about your hobo,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“His name is Bob,” said Sharie. “I heard him ask a lady for spare change. The lady told him to take a bath. I tried to give him a quarter, but he said he never took money from kids. He said he likes kids a lot. He said he was once a kid himself.”

“Does anybody have any questions they’d like to ask Hobo Bob?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

All the children raised their hands.

The hobo looked around the room. “Yes, you,” he said, pointing at Jason.

“When’s the last time you took a bath?” asked Jason.

“I never take baths,” said the hobo.

“Oh, wow,” said Jason. “You’re lucky!”

“What about a shower?” asked Myron.

“I just walk outside in the rain,” said the hobo.

“When it rains, I have to go inside!” complained Myron.

“Where do you live?” asked Joe.

“All over,” said Bob. “In the winter I jump on a southbound train and ride until it’s warm enough to jump off. In the summer I go north, where it’s not too hot.”

“How come you’re not wearing any socks?” asked Leslie.

“I don’t believe in socks,” said Bob. “Yes, the boy in the green shirt.”

“Were you really a kid once?” asked Todd.

“Yep,” said Bob.

“Did you get in trouble a lot?” asked Todd.

“No, I never got in trouble,” said Bob.

Todd smiled and nodded his head.

“Did you like to pull girls’ pigtails?” asked Paul.

“Of course,” said Bob. “Who doesn’t?”

“Did you like ice cream?” asked Maurecia.

“I loved it,” said Bob.

“What was your favorite subject?” asked Jenny.

“Spelling,” said the hobo.

“Spelling!” exclaimed Jenny. “I hate spelling!”

“I once came in first place in a spelling bee, out of all the kids in my school,” Bob said proudly.

“Well, how come you became a hobo?” asked Dameon. “I mean, if you’re such a good speller?”

“I’m not sure,” said Bob. “When you grow up, you’re supposed to turn into something. Some kids turn into dentists. Others turn into bank presidents. I didn’t turn into anything. So I became a hobo.”

“Did you ever try to get a job?” asked Calvin.

“I tried,” said Bob. “But nobody would hire me because I didn’t wear socks.”

“So why didn’t you just wear socks?” asked Eric Fry.

“I told you. I don’t believe in socks. Yes, the girl with the cute front teeth.”

Rondi lowered her hand. She was missing her two front teeth. “What do you eat?” she asked.

“Mulligan stew,” said Bob. “My friends and I collect scraps of food all day, and then we cook it up in a big pot and share it. It’s always different, but very tasty.”

“Why is it called mulligan stew?” asked Stephen.

“There was once a hobo named Mulligan,” said Bob. “He made the first mulligan stew.”

“Was he a good cook?” asked Todd.

“No, he was eaten by cannibals.”

“Yuck!” everyone said together, except for Dana, who was very confused. She thought Bob had said he was eaten by cannonballs.

Allison raised her hand. “Can’t you just wear socks, even if you don’t believe in them?” she asked.

“Socks!” Bob shouted so loud it scared everybody. “Is that all you kids ever talk about? Socks! Socks! Socks! Albert Einstein didn’t wear any socks! Why should I?”

“Who’s Albert Einstein?” asked Eric Ovens.

Mrs. Jewls answered that question. She said, “Albert Einstein was the smartest man who ever lived.”

“Was he also a hobo?” asked D. J.

“No, he was a great scientist,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Why didn’t Albert Einstein wear socks?” asked Joy.

“Because socks make you stupid,” said Bob.

“That’s not true,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Albert Einstein was just too busy thinking about big important things to remember to put on his socks.”

“Maybe,” said Bob. “But remember I told you I won the school spelling bee? Well, the day I won it, I forgot to wear socks. Think about it.”

Everyone thought about it.

“So after that I never wore socks again,” said Bob.

Mac raised his hand. “Once I could only find one of my socks,” he said. “Man, I looked everywhere for it! Under the bed, in the bathroom. You’ll never guess where I finally found it.”

“In the refrigerator,” said Bob.

Mac’s mouth dropped open. “How’d you know?”

Bob shrugged. “Where else?”

Everybody had lots more questions for Hobo Bob, but Mrs. Jewls rang her cowbell. “Show-and-tell is over,” she announced. “Let’s all thank Bob.”

“Thank you, Bob,” everyone said together.

“You’re welcome,” he replied.

“Do you know the way out of the school?” asked Sharie.

“I’m not sure,” said Bob.

“Just go straight down the stairs,” said Sharie.

“Thank you,” said Bob.

“But don’t go in the basement,” warned Sharie.

“I won’t,” said Bob. He shook Sharie’s hand, then waved good-bye to the rest of the class and headed out the door.

Everybody waved back. Sharie returned to her seat. It was time for their weekly spelling test. “Everyone take out a piece of paper and a pencil,” said Mrs. Jewls. “The first word is—”

“Wait a second!” called Calvin. “I’m not ready yet.”

Mrs. Jewls waited while all the children took off their socks.

Pigtails

“Hi, Leslie,” said Paul.

“Hi, Paul,” said Leslie.

They were friends now. Paul hadn’t pulled either of her pigtails for a long time.

Paul sat in the desk behind Leslie. Once, a long time ago, he had pulled Leslie’s pigtails. It felt *great!*

That is—Paul thought it felt great. Leslie didn’t think it felt too good.

But that was earlier in the year, when Paul was younger and immature. Now he knew better.

Still, her two long brown pigtails hung in front of his face, all day, every day.

The bell rang for recess.

“Leslie,” said Paul. “Can I talk to you a second?”

“Sure, Paul,” said Leslie.

They were alone in the room. All the other kids had rushed down the stairs. Mrs. Jewls had run to the teachers’ lounge.

“I’ve been good, right?” asked Paul. “I haven’t pulled one of your pigtails in a long time, have I?”

“So what do you want, a medal?” asked Leslie.

Paul chuckled. “No, well, can I ask you something?”

“Sure,” said Leslie.

Paul took a breath. “May I pull just one of your pigtails?” he asked. “Please?”

“No!” said Leslie.

“Please?” Paul begged. “I won’t pull it hard. No one will have to know. Please? Please? I wouldn’t ask if it wasn’t important! Please?”

“You’re sick!” exclaimed Leslie.

Paul lowered his head. “I’m sorry,” he said. “You’re right. I don’t know what came over me. I won’t ask again.”

“Good,” said Leslie. She shook her head in disgust.

Paul watched her pigtails waggle. “Can I just touch one?” he asked. “I won’t even pull it. I promise.”

“No!”

“What’s wrong with just touching one?” Paul asked.

“Yuck, you’re gross!” said Leslie as she turned and marched out of the room.

As Paul watched her go, her pigtails seemed to wave good-bye to him.

He slapped himself in the face with both hands. What’s wrong with me? he wondered.

He walked to the side of the room and leaned over the counter. He stuck his head out the window to get some fresh air. Down below, he could see the kids playing on the playground. They looked like tiny toys.

Leslie stepped back into the classroom. “I’m getting my hair trimmed tomorrow,” she announced. “If you want, I’ll save the pieces for you. It’ll just be some split ends.”

Paul was so excited he forgot where he was. He quickly raised his head. It bashed against the window frame, then he bounced forward and toppled out the window.

Leslie stared in horror at the open window, then rushed toward it. She leaned over the counter and looked down.

“Help!” gasped Paul.

There was one brick on the side of the building that stuck out a little farther than the others. Paul desperately held on to it with both hands.

“I’ll go get Louis,” said Leslie. “He’ll save you.”

“No, don’t go!” cried Paul. “I can’t hold on. My fingers are slipping!”

Leslie reached down for him. “Try to grab my hand,” she said.

Paul made a grab for it, but missed, then quickly clutched the brick. “I can’t! Help, I’m scared.”

“Just don’t look down,” said Leslie as she tried to stay calm. She pulled her head back in through the window.

“Where are you going!” cried Paul. “Help! Don’t leave me.”

Leslie looked around Mrs. Jewls’s room for a rope or an extension cord or something for Paul to grab, but she couldn’t find anything.

She returned to the window, sighed, then leaned out backward. Her hands tightly held the edge of the counter as she looked up at the sky. “Grab my pigtails,” she said, then winced.

A big smile came across Paul’s face. “Really?” he asked.

“Just do it!” said Leslie.

The pigtails hung about a foot above Paul’s head. He let go of the brick with his right hand and grabbed her right pigtail.

“Yaaaaaaaahhhhhhhh!” Leslie yelped.

He grabbed her left pigtail with his left hand.

“Yaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhh!” she screamed.

“Okay, pull me in,” said Paul. His legs dangled beneath him.

Leslie’s eyes watered in pain as she tried to step away from the window. “I can’t!” she groaned. “You’re too heavy.”

Paul swung his legs up against the side of the building. “Try now.”

Leslie groaned, then took a small step away from the window as Paul took a small step up the wall. Then they each took another small step. At last Paul managed to get one foot on top of the brick that jutted out.

Leslie pulled her head inside the window. As she took another step, Paul let go of one pigtail and grabbed the windowsill. Leslie took another step, pulling Paul the rest of the way through.

They both collapsed on the floor, tired and sore.

“Ooh, my head hurts,” said Leslie.

“Wow, you saved my life,” said Paul. “Well, don’t worry, someday I’ll save yours.”

“You don’t have to,” said Leslie. “Just don’t pull my pigtails anymore.”

“I won’t,” said Paul. Suddenly he laughed.

“What’s so funny?” asked Leslie.

“This time your pigtails pulled me.”

7

Freedom

Myron crumbled a cracker on the windowsill next to his desk, then looked away. He knew Oddly came only when nobody was looking.

A little while later a bird landed on the windowsill and ate the crumbs. Myron watched him out of the comer of his eye.

He was a black bird with a pink breast. Myron had named him "Oddly." Myron had named him oddly.

"Is that your dumb bird again?" asked Kathy.

"No," said Myron. "Oddly is not *my* bird. I don't own him. He doesn't live in a cage. Oddly is free!"

"You're a birdbrain," said Kathy.

Myron watched Oddly fly away. It made him sad and glad at the same time. He wished he could fly away across the sky with Oddly.

Oddly probably thinks I live in a cage, he realized. Whenever he sees me, I'm sitting in this same desk. He probably thinks this desk is my cage!

So Myron got out of his chair and sat on the floor.

"Myron, what are you doing out of your seat?" asked Mrs. Jewls.

"I want to sit on the floor," said Myron.

Several kids laughed.

"Get back in your seat," ordered Mrs. Jewls.

Myron reluctantly returned to his desk.

I *do* live in a cage, he thought. I'm not allowed out. I have to stay in my cage until the bell rings. Then I have to go down the stairs. Then when it rings again, I have to go up the stairs. Then when it rings again, I have to go down the stairs. Then when it rings again, I have to go up the stairs. I'm never free.

The bell rang.

Myron went down the stairs.

It was so crowded with kids rushing to recess that he couldn't stop if he wanted. It was as if someone had lifted his cage and was carrying him down the stairs.

The bell rang again.

Myron went up the stairs.

At lunch the bell rang again.

Myron went down the stairs.

After lunch, the bell rang again.

Myron stood at the bottom of the staircase and looked up. "No!" he declared. "I won't go. I have to be free!"

As all the other kids rushed past him, he eased his way around to the back of the stairs. As everybody else went up, Myron went down . . .

to

the

basement.

He nervously walked down the old creaky staircase. He didn't know what he'd find, or what would find him. He had heard that dead rats were living down there, or worse, maybe even Mrs. Gorf!

Mrs. Gorf was the meanest teacher Myron had ever had. She used to be the teacher on the thirtieth story, before Mrs. Jewls took over. But nobody believed that Mrs. Gorf was really gone. Everyone said she was still lurking somewhere inside Wayside School.

He stepped off the last step, at the very bottom of Wayside School. It was too dark to see. Somewhere he heard a drip that echoed all around the cold and damp room.

With his arms outstretched, he stepped across the gritty floor. His hand struck against a large, fat pipe above his head. The pipe felt like it was covered with a thousand spiderwebs. Still, Myron kept his finger on the pipe as he walked, so he wouldn't get lost. As long as he stayed with the pipe, he knew he'd be able to find his way back to the stairs.

Something crawled across his hand. He shook it off, then continued walking.

He thought he heard footsteps behind him. He stopped walking. The sound of the footsteps continued for a second, then stopped.

He started again, then stopped. The footsteps stopped a few seconds later.

He wasn't alone.

It was too dark for Myron to see who was following him, but he realized that meant that the person couldn't see him either. Whoever was coming after him had to have been following along the pipe, too.

So Myron left the safety of the pipe and headed blindly across the basement.

The footsteps continued behind him.

He stopped.

The footsteps stopped too.

He bent down, then untied and took off his right sneaker. He threw it toward the other side of the basement. He heard it hit on the floor, then the

footsteps started after it.

Very quietly, he took off his other sneaker and threw it in the same direction.

He never heard his shoe hit the ground.

The footsteps started after him again.

He started to run, but slipped in his socked feet on a spot of slime. His hands hit loud and hard as he fell on the cold floor.

The footsteps came hurriedly toward him.

He held his breath and tried to be as quiet as possible.

A light turned on above his head.

He screamed.

“I believe this is yours,” said a bald man. He was holding Myron’s left sneaker.

Next to him were two men with black mustaches. One of the men held a black attaché case.

Myron shook his head. “That’s not my shoe,” he said. “I never saw it before.”

The bald man glanced at Myron’s shoeless feet.

“What’s your name?” asked the man with the attaché case.

“Myron,” said Myron. He regretted it as soon as he had said it. He wished he had made up a fake name.

The man opened his attaché case and took out a notebook. “Myron,” he repeated, as he thumbed through the notebook. “You’re supposed to be in Mrs. Jewls’s class, at the desk next to the window, in front of Sharie.”

“What are you doing out of your cage—I mean, seat?” asked the other man with a mustache.

“I just wanted to be free,” chirped Myron. “Please don’t hurt me. If you let me go back to Mrs. Jewls’s room, I’ll never come down here again.”

“Well, do you want to be free, or do you want to be safe?” asked the bald man.

“Huh?” asked Myron.

“You can’t have it both ways,” said the bald man.

“Do you want to be safe?” asked one of the men with a mustache. “Do you want to sit in the same chair every day, and go up and down the stairs every time the bell rings?”

“You’ll have go to school five days a week,” said the other man with a mustache. “And you’ll have to go to bed at the same time every day.”

“But first you’ll have to brush your teeth,” said the other man with a mustache.

“And you won’t be allowed to watch TV until you finish your homework,” said the other man with a mustache.

“You’ll have to go inside when it rains,” said the other man with a mustache.

“But first you’ll have to wipe your feet,” said the other man with a mustache.

“Or you can be free,” said the bald man.

The man took a pencil and a piece of paper out of his attaché case. “So do you want to be safe, or do you want to be free?”

Myron looked at the three men. “I want to be free,” he said bravely.

The man with the attaché case wrote something on the piece of paper and gave it to Myron. “Sign here,” he said.

Myron couldn’t read the piece of paper. It was written in some kind of foreign language. He signed his name.

The man took the paper and pencil from Myron and put them back into his attaché case. “Okay, you’re free,” he said.

“Good luck, Myron,” said the bald man. “Here, I think you’ll need this.” He gave Myron his left sneaker, then reached up and pulled the chain. The light turned off.

Myron found himself alone in the darkness. He put his shoe back on, then hopped across the basement floor. He had no idea how to get back.

At last his hand hit against a pipe. But he still didn’t know which way to follow it, left or right. He didn’t even know if it was the right pipe. He turned left and continued hopping, keeping his finger on the pipe.

He was just about ready to turn around and try the other way when he nearly fell over the bottom stair.

He hopped up the stairs, and continued hopping all the way up to Mrs. Jewls’s room.

He was tired, sore, and dirty.

“You’re late, Myron,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Go write your name under DISCIPLINE, then return to your seat for the arithmetic test.”

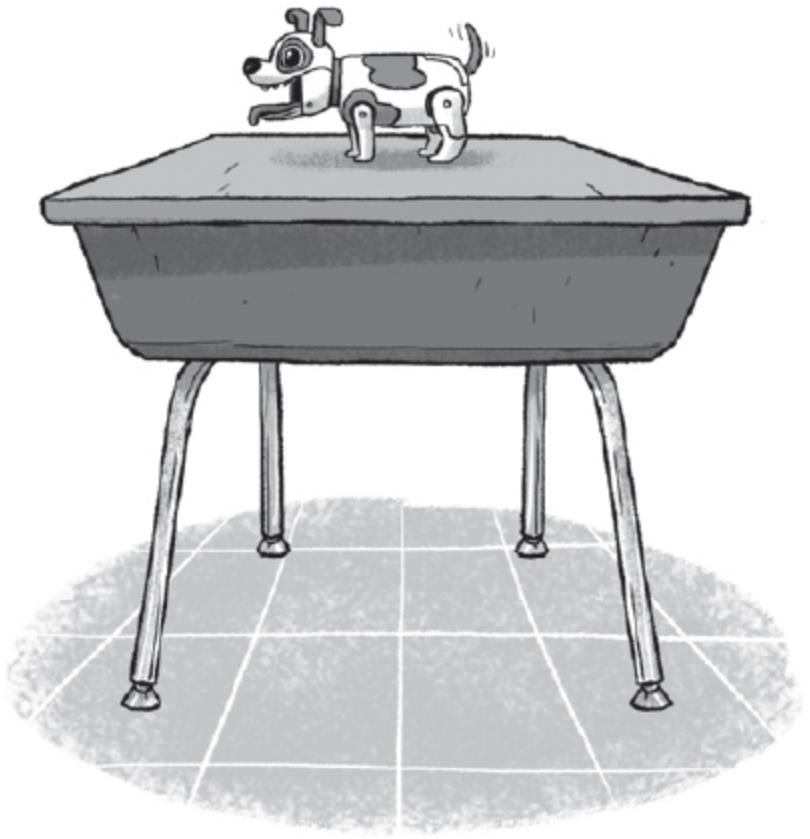
But Myron didn’t feel like taking an arithmetic test. And he definitely didn’t want to write his name on the board.

So he sat on the floor.

And there was nothing Mrs. Jewls could do about it.

He was free.

After school Mrs. Jewls found Myron’s other sneaker in the teachers’ lounge, in the refrigerator.



8

The Best Part

Todd brought a toy to school. It was a cute, adorable puppy dog. Everyone who saw it said, “Aw.”

“Aw,” said Jenny. “He has such a sweet face.”

“Aw,” said Stephen. “Look at her darling eyes.”

“Aw,” said Deedee. “Isn’t he the cutest puppy you’ve ever seen?”

“Aw,” said Calvin. “Isn’t she adorable?”

Joy sat at the desk behind Todd. Big deal, she thought. It’s just a hunk of plastic that happens to look like a dog.

But even though Joy didn’t like Todd’s toy, she decided to steal it.

“Wait,” said Todd. “Let me show you the best part.”

Before he could show them the best part, Mrs. Jewls rang her cowbell. “Take your seats!” she commanded. “The bell has rung!”

All the children returned to their desks.

“Todd, go write your name on the blackboard.”

Todd was the only one who had been in his seat, yet he was the one who got in trouble. That was typical.

Mrs. Jewls had a system. The first time someone got in trouble, he had to write his name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE. The second time he got in trouble, he had to put a check next to his name. And if he got in trouble a third time, he had to circle his name and then go home early, at twelve o’clock, on the kindergarten bus.

Todd went home on the kindergarten bus every day. Some of the other kids thought he was lucky, but he wished just once he could make it to twelve o’clock without getting into trouble three times.

He walked to the front of the room and wrote his name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

While Todd was at the board, Joy reached over her desk and into Todd’s. She felt around for the toy. But as she tried to lift it out, it caught on something and dropped to the floor.

Todd returned to his seat.

“Todd, is that your toy on the floor?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Hey, how’d that get there?” asked Todd.

“You know the rules, Todd,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Toys must be kept inside your desk, or else I take them. Now bring it here.”

Todd gave his toy to Mrs. Jewls.

“Awwww, how precious,” cooed Mrs. Jewls. “He’s the most lovable puppy I’ve ever seen.” She kissed Todd’s plastic puppy on its plastic nose. “I guess I can let you off this time,” she said. “But try to keep him in your desk.” She kissed Todd’s toy again, then handed it back to him. “You can erase your name from the board, too.”

Todd could hardly believe it. For the first time ever, he erased his name from the board.

As he headed back to his seat, Mrs. Jewls said, “Here, take a Tootsie Roll Pop too, for the sweeeeeet puppy.”

Todd was amazed.

So was Joy. Now, more than ever, she wanted that toy!

Out at recess everyone wanted to see Todd’s toy.

“It’s magic,” said Bebe. “It kept you from getting into trouble.”

“No, Mrs. Jewls is just a nice teacher,” said Todd. “Here, let me show you the best part.”

He grabbed hold of the dog’s tail and turned it like a crank. Suddenly the cute floppy ears stood straight up. The mouth opened wide, and the teeth grew into sharp fangs.

“Wow,” breathed Deedee.

Todd wasn’t finished. He pulled the dog’s nose and stretched out its face. The cheeks became thin and bony. The eyes were no longer sweet, but grim and frightening.

“What a great toy!” said Calvin.

The cute little puppy had turned into a mean, hungry, man-eating wolf.

“I still haven’t shown you the best part,” said Todd.

But before he could show them the best part, the bell rang, and everyone ran up the stairs to class.

I’ve got to get that puppy dog, thought Joy as she stared at the back of Todd’s neck. Then I’ll never get in trouble again! She didn’t know Todd’s toy had changed into a man-eating wolf.

Her lunch box was on her lap. She quietly opened it and took out a carton of cranberry juice and a tiny straw.

She stuck the straw into the carton and sucked up some juice into it.

She waited for Mrs. Jewls to turn around, then blew the juice out of the straw. It splattered against Todd’s neck.

He slapped the back of his neck with his hand.

Joy laughed to herself. She sucked up some more juice, took careful aim, and fired.

Todd turned around, but Joy already had the straw out of her mouth and was looking down at her book.

Todd rubbed his neck and faced front.

Joy sucked up more juice and blew it onto Todd’s neck.

“Hey!” he shouted, turning around.

“Leave me alone, Todd—I’m trying to work,” said Joy.

“Todd, what’s the matter with you?” asked Mrs. Jewls. “I try to be nice, but you just take advantage. Now go write your name on the blackboard.”

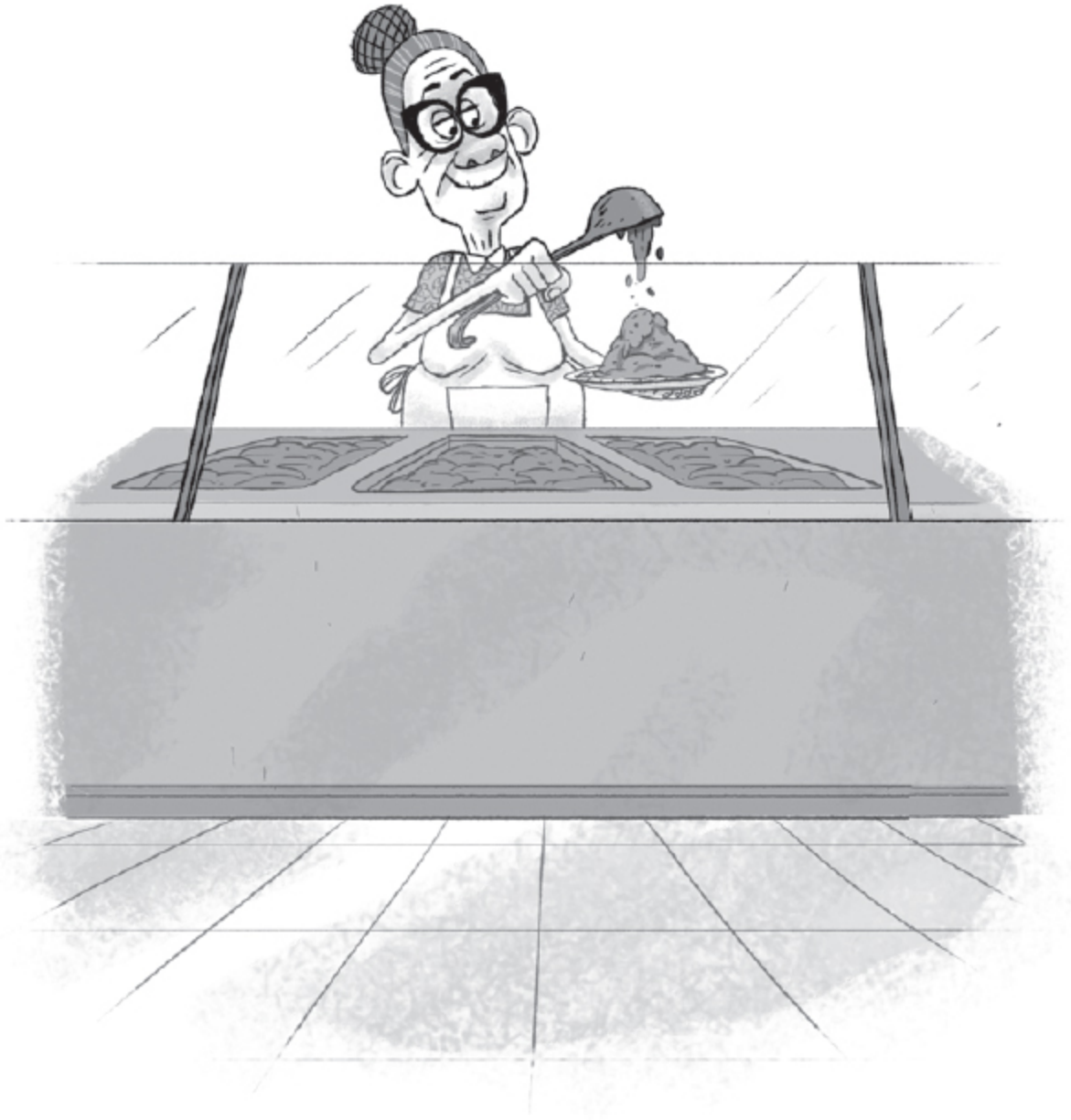
Todd walked to the front of the room. He still thought Mrs. Jewls was the nicest teacher in the world. He looked up at the clock. It was almost

eleven. I might just make it today, he thought. I just might make it. He started to write his name when he heard a loud scream.

He turned around and saw Joy jumping up and down and waving her hand in the air. His toy was biting her pinky, and she couldn't shake it off.

"Help!" screamed Joy as she hopped around the room. "Todd, how do I get it off? Todd? Please?"

Todd smiled. "There," he said. "That's the best part."



9

Mush

WARNING: Do not read this story right after eating. In fact, don’t read it right before eating, either. In fact, just to be safe, don’t

read this story if you're ever planning to eat again.

Miss Mush wiped her hands on her apron. She smiled at the children who were lined up at the cafeteria. It warmed her heart to see how much they liked her food.

Maurecia was first in line.

"And what would you like today, Maurecia?" Miss Mush asked. She knew the name of every child in Wayside School.

Maurecia looked at the sign.

SPECIAL TODAY: MUSHROOM SURPRISE

"Just milk," said Maurecia. "I brought my lunch."

Miss Mush smiled and gave Maurecia a carton of milk.

Joy was next in line.

"And what would you like, Joy?" asked Miss Mush.

"Milk," said Joy.

Miss Mush smiled and gave Joy a carton of milk. "And what would you like, Jason?"

"Milk, please," said Jason.

"Just milk," said Dameon.

"Milk," said D.J.

"Milk," said Leslie.

It was almost Ron's turn. He hadn't brought a lunch. He normally brought a peanut butter and jelly sandwich to school, but there hadn't been a single slice of bread in his house this morning.

"I know!" his mother had said. "I'll give you some money and you can buy a nice hot lunch from Miss Mush!" She thought it was a brilliant idea.

"Can't I just have a peanut butter and jelly sandwich without the bread?" Ron had asked.

Now he looked up at the sign.

SPECIAL TODAY: MUSHROOM SURPRISE

He wished he weren’t so hungry.

This was the eighteenth day in a row that the special was Mushroom Surprise. It was called Mushroom Surprise because it would have been a surprise if anybody had ever ordered it. No one ever did—except Louis, of course. That’s why they’d had it for eighteen days. There was always plenty left over.

“Milk,” said Terrence.

“Milk,” said Sharie.

“Milk,” said Calvin.

“Milk, please,” said Bebe.

“And what would you like today, Ron?” asked Miss Mush.

Ron took a breath. “Mushroom Surprise,” he squeaked.

Tears of joy filled Miss Mush’s eyes. She blew her nose on her apron, then said, “One Mushroom Surprise, coming right up!”

Tears came to Ron’s eyes too, but for a different reason. He looked at the Mushroom Surprise. It was sort of green.

So was Ron.

Miss Mush proudly dumped a hot lump of Mushroom Surprise on a paper plate and handed it to Ron. He put it on his tray, then pushed it over to the cash register, where he paid for it.

The news quickly spread around the cafeteria, then up and down the stairs and out to the playground.

“Ron ordered the Mushroom Surprise!”

“Ron ordered the Mushroom Surprise!”

Mrs. Jewls was sitting in the teachers’ lounge on the twelfth floor when Bebe burst into the room.

All the teachers were shocked to see her.

“Bebe, you’re not allowed in here,” said Mrs. Jewls. “This is a secret place.”

“Ron ordered the Mushroom Surprise!” Bebe shouted; then she ran back up to the cafeteria.

As Ron sat down at a table, eighty-seven kids crowded around him to watch him eat.

“I wonder what the surprise is,” said Deedee. She had the best view. She was pushed right up alongside Ron’s chair.

“Maybe it tastes good,” said Leslie. “Maybe that’s the surprise.”

“No, I think it’s called Mushroom Surprise because after you eat it, it’s a surprise if you don’t die,” said Mac.

“Louis eats it. He’s not dead,” said Jason.

“Louis has been eating Miss Mush’s food for so long, he’s immune to it,” said Allison.

Ron dug his plastic fork into the goop. He raised it to his mouth.

Dana covered her eyes. “I can’t watch!” she exclaimed.

Ron opened his mouth wide. The fork entered. He brought the fork out again.

It was empty!

Ron chewed twice, then swallowed.

“He ate it!” Deedee announced for those who couldn’t see.

Stephen screamed.

“Hmm,” said Ron. “Not too bad. It sort of tastes like a mixture of bananas and spinach.”

“What’s the surprise?” asked Deedee.

Ron looked at Deedee. His face flushed and his eyes changed color. His whole body began to shake, like a washing machine on the spin cycle.

Deedee was afraid he was going to throw up. She tried to get away, but with everyone crowded around, there was no room for her to move.

But Ron didn’t throw up. He stood up, put his arms around Deedee’s neck, and kissed her smack on the lips.

He sat back down. His eyes returned to their normal color.

“Ylah!” said Deedee, wiping her mouth on her sleeve.

“What’s the matter?” asked Ron.

“Don’t you know what you just did?” asked Allison.

He shrugged. “I ate some Mushroom Surprise. It wasn’t bad. Sort of like a mixture of a hot dog and grape jelly. I wonder what the surprise is.”

He dug his plastic fork back into the goop.

Everybody ran away.

When Mrs. Jewls entered the cafeteria, no one was there except for Ron. He was sitting alone at a table eating Mushroom Surprise.

Mrs. Jewls sat down next to him. “Hi Ron,” she said. “So how does it taste? And what’s the surprise?”

Ron swallowed another mouthful. He looked at his teacher. His face flushed and his eyes changed color. . . .

10

Music

Benjamin still hadn’t told anybody he wasn’t Mark Miller.

His grades had never been better. Mark Miller is a lot smarter than Benjamin Nushmutt, he thought.

When they chose up teams for kickball, he was always the first one picked. Mark Miller is a better kicker than Benjamin Nushmutt, he realized.

The girls in the class liked him too. Mark Miller is better looking than Benjamin Nushmutt, he decided.

But unfortunately, he knew he had to tell Mrs. Jewls his real name. He sighed, then slowly raised his hand.

Mrs. Jewls gave him a tambourine.

He had been so busy thinking about his problem, he hadn't noticed that Mrs. Jewls was passing out musical instruments. She had just asked, "Who would like the tambourine?" So when he raised his hand, she gave it to him.

"Who would like the triangle?" asked Mrs. Jewls.

Joe raised his hand, and Mrs. Jewls gave it to him.

"Why is it called a triangle?" asked Joe.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Jewls.

"Maybe because it's shaped like a triangle," suggested John.

"No, that can't be it," said Mrs. Jewls. "Then the tambourine would have to be called a circle."

"Maybe it was invented by a person named Joe Triangle," said Rondi.

"That's probably it," said Mrs. Jewls. She held up the next instrument. It was a glockenspiel. "Who would like the glockenspiel?" she asked.

Sharie raised her hand.

Nobody asked why it was called a glockenspiel. It was obvious.

Mrs. Jewls gave the bells to Stephen.

"Why are they called bells?" he asked.

Nobody knew.

Joy got the bongo drums. Todd got the bass drum. Jenny snared the snare drum. And Leslie got the kettledrum.

When they banged on them, it hurt everybody else's eardrums.

Mrs. Jewls gave one cymbal to Calvin and the other cymbal to Bebe.

D.J. got the gong. The three Erics got kazoos.

Mrs. Jewls shouted, *"Uno, dos, tres, cuatro!"*

The children all played their instruments. They shook, rattled, rocked, and rolled.

Joy bonged her bongos. D.J. gonged his gong. Sharie glockened her glockenspiel. Stephen jingled his bells. Calvin and Bebe slapped their cymbals together. And Joe's triangle went *ting*.

But something didn't sound right.

“What’s wrong, Mark?” Mrs. Jewls shouted over the music. “Why aren’t you playing the tambourine?”

“My name’s not Mark,” said Benjamin. “It’s Benjamin Nushmutt. I’m sorry for not telling you before.”

“What?” asked Mrs. Jewls. “I can’t hear you.”

“My name isn’t Mark!” he said. “It’s Benjamin.”

“Louder!” said Mrs. Jewls.

So everyone played louder.

Todd bashed his bass drum. Leslie cooked on her kettledrum. Calvin and Bebe crashed their cymbals together. And Joe’s triangle went *ting.*

“My name is Benjamin!” shouted Benjamin.

Mrs. Jewls put her hand to her ear. “Louder!” she said.

So everyone played louder.

D.J. kabonged his gong. Joy chongoed her bongos. Paul splacked his castanets. Jenny spaghettied her snare drum. Calvin and Bebe wammered their cymbals. And Joe’s triangle went *ting.*

“My name’s Benjamin Nushmutt,” hollered Benjamin Nushmutt.

“Louder!” yelled Mrs. Jewls.

So everyone played louder.

The three Erics screamed into their kazoos. Calvin and Bebe ran to opposite sides of the room with their cymbals, then charged toward each other.

Suddenly the door flew open, and a man entered. Benjamin had never seen him before.

The whole class became very quiet.

It was Mr. Kidswatter, the principal.

Calvin and Bebe screeched to a halt just in time. Their cymbals were less than an inch apart.

“Is something the matter, Mr. Kidswatter?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Several teachers have complained about your music,” said Mr. Kidswatter. “Their students are having trouble hearing.”

“I understand,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Good,” said Mr. Kidswatter. He walked out of the room.

“Okay, you heard Mr. Kidswatter,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Well have to play louder so everyone can hear. *Uno, dos, tres, cuatro!*”

They shook, rattled, rocked, and rolled.

Benjamin frampled his tambourine.

“Excellent, Mark!” shouted Mrs. Jewls.

He smiled. He had never played so well before. Mark Miller is a better musician than Benjamin Nushmutt, he thought.

11

Kathy and D.J.

Down on the playground Kathy was singing her favorite song.

"Wayside School is falling down,
falling down, falling down.
Wayside School is falling down,
my fair lady.
"Kids go splat *as they hit the ground,*
hit the ground, hit the ground.
Kids go splat *as they hit the ground,*
my fair lady."

D.J. was walking across the playground with his head down.

“Hi, Dr. Jolly,” said Louis. Louis called D.J. “Doctor Jolly” because he was always smiling.

But now D.J.’s smile was upside down. He looked up at Louis.

Louis had never seen such a sad face. “What’s wrong?” he asked.

D.J. just shook his head, then looked back down at the ground and sadly walked away.

Louis felt like crying.

“Hey, Louis, what’s wrong with D.J.?” asked Ron.

“He’s so sad!” said Deedee.

“I don’t know,” said Louis, shaking his head. “Hey, you guys want to play kickball?”

“No thanks,” said Deedee. “I can’t have fun when D.J. is unhappy.”

“Me neither,” said Ron.

Across the playground, all the children quit their games when they saw D.J. Nobody could have fun when D.J. looked so sad.

Except Kathy! She sang:

“Broken bones and blood and gore,
blood and gore, blood and gore.
Broken bones and blood and gore,
my fair lady.
“We don’t have no school no more,
school no more, school no more.
We don’t have no school no more,
my fair lady.”

The bell rang. D.J. sadly looked up at the school and sighed.

“Hey, Deej, snap out of it,” said Myron.

D.J. stared through his friend.

“You want to walk up the stairs with us, Dojo?” asked Dameon.

D.J. shook his head. “I need to be alone,” he mumbled.

Dameon and Myron looked at each other, then started up the stairs, leaving their sad friend behind.

D.J. headed on up, but stopped halfway between the ninth and tenth floors and sat down. He lowered his face into his hands and cried.

A moment later someone burst out laughing.

D.J. opened his eyes and saw Kathy standing over him.

“You shouldn’t sit on the stairs, Dumb Jerk!” said Kathy with glee. “I almost kicked you in the head.”

Kathy always called D.J. “Dumb Jerk.”

She didn’t like D.J. because he was always smiling. Now she was glad to see him so sad.

“Hi, Kathy,” said D.J.

She plopped down on the stair next to him. “What happened?” she asked. “Did your dog die?” She laughed.

D.J. shook his head.

“Are your parents getting divorced?” she asked hopefully. “Did your house burn down?”

“No,” said D.J. “My great-grandfather gave me a gold watch. It was over a hundred years old. I brought it to school today and—”

“You lost it!” Kathy exclaimed with delight.

D.J. sadly nodded.

Kathy laughed. “Oh boy, are you going to get in trouble!” She rubbed her hands together. “Your parents will ground you forever!”

“No, my parents never punish me,” said D.J. “They know I learn from my mistakes.”

“Oh,” said Kathy, a little disappointed. “But your great-grandfather will *hate* you!” she said. “And he’ll never give you another present for the rest of your life. Not even for your birthday!”

“No, he loves me no matter what I do,” said D.J. “He likes people, not *things*.”

Again Kathy was disappointed. “But the watch was worth a lot of money,” she tried. “And *you’ll* have to pay for it out of *your* allowance.” She laughed triumphantly, sure she had gotten him this time.

“I don’t get an allowance,” said D.J. “I don’t like money.”

Kathy frowned. Still, she knew there had to be some reason why he was sad about losing the watch. “You’ll never know what time it is!” she squawked.

“So?” asked D.J. “Time isn’t real.”

Kathy didn’t know what D.J. meant by that, but she didn’t care. “Well, if you don’t know what time it is,” she told him, “you’ll miss all your favorite television shows.”

“I don’t have a favorite television show,” said D.J. “I never watch television.” He thought a moment. “I’m not sure if we have a TV in our

house or not. Maybe there's one in a closet somewhere."

Kathy glared at him. "Well, then how come you're so sad you lost that dumb watch?" she demanded.

"I'm afraid a bird might think it's food and choke on it," said D.J.

"Is that all?" shrieked Kathy.

D.J. smiled. "I guess you're right," he said. "A bird probably wouldn't choke. In fact, maybe he could use it to make a nest. I hope so, don't you?" He hopped to his feet. "Thanks for talking to me, Kathy. I feel a lot better now. You're a good friend."

He hurried up to Mrs. Jewls's room, taking the stairs two and three at a time.

As D.J.'s smile turned up, Kathy's smile turned down. She followed up after him, grumbling to herself. "He doesn't like money. He doesn't worry about time. He never watches television. Why is he always so happy?"

Everyone in Mrs. Jewls's class cheered when they saw D.J. enter the room smiling.

Kathy walked in behind him frowning.

Mrs. Jewls was getting ready to show a movie. She gave D.J. a piece of black construction paper.

"Hey, look!" exclaimed Myron. "Oddly found a watch!"

Oddly, the bird, dropped the watch on the windowsill.

Kathy couldn't believe it! "It's D.J.'s," she griped.

Myron gave the watch to D.J.

"Here, you can have it, Kathy," said D.J. with a big smile. "It's worth a lot of money, and this way you won't miss any of your favorite television shows."

Kathy took the watch from him and put it around her wrist. "It'll probably make my skin turn green," she groused.

Mrs. Jewls started the movie projector. Stephen turned off the lights. Dameon pulled down the shades. D.J. held the piece of black construction paper under his nose, because his smile was so bright.

12

Pencils

Jason borrowed a pencil from Allison. When he gave it back to her, it was full of teeth marks.

Allison held the pencil by its point. “Yuck!” she said. “You chewed on it.”

Jason felt awful. It is very embarrassing to borrow somebody’s pencil and then chew on it. “Sorry,” he said. “I didn’t do it on purpose.”

“You can keep it,” said Allison. She dropped the pencil on Jason’s desk, then raised her hand. “Mrs. Jewls, can I go to the bathroom? I have to wash my hands. Jason slobbered all over my pencil.”

Everybody laughed.

Jason turned red. “I’m sorry, Allison,” he said. “I know it’s a disgusting habit. I just can’t help it.”

“Don’t let Jason touch any of my books,” said Allison as she headed out of the room. “He might eat them!”

Everybody laughed again.

“Here, you can eat my book, Jason,” said Todd. “I don’t like it anyway.”

Mrs. Jewls made Todd write his name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

Jason was so mad at himself, he broke the chewed-up pencil to bits.

That wasn’t a smart thing to do.

“Everybody take out a pencil and a piece of paper,” said Mrs. Jewls. “It’s time for our spelling test.”

Jason slapped himself on the forehead. I’m so stupid! he thought. “Rondi, may I borrow a pencil, please?” he asked.

Rondi made a face. “All my pencils are new,” she said. “How do I know you won’t eat it?”

“I won’t,” said Jason. “I promise.”

“You better not,” said Rondi. She gave him one of her pencils.

It was new and freshly sharpened. Jason liked the way it smelled.

“The first word is ‘orchestra,’” said Mrs. Jewls.

Jason tried to remember how to spell *orchestra.* He stuck the back of the pencil in his mouth.

“Second word, ‘garbanzo.’”

Jason chewed on the eraser.

When the spelling test was over, Rondi’s pencil was worse than Allison’s.

Jason looked at it in horror. He didn’t even remember chewing it. Oh, no! he thought. What am I going to do? He stuck it inside his desk.

“Jason, may I have my pencil back, please?” asked Rondi.

“What pencil?” asked Jason.

“The one I lent you,” said Rondi.

Jason opened his desk and pretended to look for it. “I don’t know where it is,” he said.

“Mrs. Jewls, Jason stole my pencil!” called Rondi.

“Jason, give Rondi back her pencil,” said Mrs. Jewls.

He gave it to her.

“You chewed on it!” exclaimed Rondi.

Everyone laughed.

“No I didn’t,” said Jason, “Those are your teeth marks.”

“How can they be my teeth marks?” asked Rondi. She smiled. She was missing her two front teeth.

“So?” said Jason. “You don’t chew pencils with your front teeth. You chew them with your back teeth.”

“How do you know?” asked Rondi.

“Um, um, uh,” said Jason.

Mrs. Jewls made Jason write his name on the board under the word DISCIPLINE because he chewed Rondi’s pencil, then lied about it. “And try not to eat the chalk,” she said.

Everyone laughed.

Rondi threw the chewed-up pencil out the window.

It hit Louis on the head.

Mrs. Jewls gave Dameon a stack of work sheets and asked him to pass them out. They contained arithmetic problems.

Jason had to borrow another pencil.

“Allison, may I borrow another pencil, please?” he asked.

“Eat my socks,” said Allison.

That wasn’t such a bad idea, Jason realized. If he stuffed a sock in his mouth, he wouldn’t be able to chew a pencil.

Myron looked at his work sheet. “I don’t feel like doing this stuff,” he said. “Here, Jason, you can have my pencil.”

“Thanks, Myron,” said Jason. “I promise not to chew it.” He hoped he’d be able to keep his promise.

He thought about asking Mrs. Jewls for a Tootsie Roll Pop. If I’m sucking on that, I won’t chew Myron’s pencil. And a Tootsie Roll Pop

would probably taste better than Allison's socks. He didn't know for sure because he had never tasted Allison's socks.

But before he could ask Mrs. Jewls, Mrs. Jewls called him. "Jason, will you come here for a moment," she said. "I think I know how to keep you from chewing pencils."

Jason smiled as he walked to her desk. "I like the purple ones," he told her.

But Mrs. Jewls didn't give him a Tootsie Roll Pop. Instead, she taped his mouth shut with heavy-duty masking tape. She had to use a lot of tape, because Jason had the second biggest mouth in the class. "There," she said.

Jason started back to his seat.

"Aren't you even going to say thank you?" asked Mrs. Jewls.

"Mhhmm hhm," said Jason.

"You're welcome," said Mrs. Jewls.

"Hey, Jason," teased Allison. "You look like a mummy!"

"Don't sneeze," said Rondi. "You'll blow your head off!"

They both laughed.

"Mh mhhh mhrhhmmm!" Jason said back to them. It was a very bad thing to say. He wasn't supposed to use words like that.

"You better not pull the tape off," said Rondi. "You might rip off your lips!"

They both laughed again.

Jason had never been more embarrassed in his whole life. His ears burned as he set to work on the arithmetic problems.

They were tough problems. Several times the pencil crashed against the tape, but the tape held firm.

Mrs. Jewls was very proud of herself. Not only did the tape protect Myron's pencil, but Mrs. Jewls also noticed that Jason was quieter than he'd ever been. I should tape all their mouths shut, she thought. Then they'd all be so nice and quiet.

It was such a good idea, she wondered why no other teacher had ever thought of it.

13

A Giggle Box, a Leaky Faucet, and a Foghorn

Every day after lunch Mrs. Jewls read a story to the class.

Dana hated stories.

The last book Mrs. Jewls had read was a story about a pig and spider. The pig was real cute and the spider was very wise.

Dana thought it was a horrible book. It made her laugh too much. Everyone else laughed too, but the problem was that Dana always kept laughing long after everyone else in the class had stopped. It was very embarrassing. And sometimes she broke out laughing at a part that wasn't even funny because she remembered something funny that had happened earlier.

John called her a giggle box.

That only made her laugh harder.

Once she broke up laughing in the middle of an arithmetic test because she remembered something funny the pig had said.

"There goes the giggle box," said John.

She hated John.

But that wasn't the worst part of the book. In the end, the spider died.

Dana couldn't stop crying. And she thought it was so silly, too, because in real life she didn't even like spiders! She squashed them all the time.

John called her a leaky faucet. "Somebody better call a plumber to fix the leaky faucet," he said.

She laughed through her tears. She hated John.

Once in music, they had learned a song about a dragon. When the song begins the dragon is very brave, but then he loses his only friend, so he isn't brave anymore. He just goes back to his cave, where he is sad and lonely for the rest of his life.

The song always made Dana cry. Every recess John and Joe would chase after her, singing it. She'd run across the playground with her hands over her ears and tears streaming down her face.

The bell rang. Lunch was over. Dana nervously walked up the stairs to Mrs. Jewls's room. Mrs. Jewls would start a new book today. She hoped it wouldn't be funny or sad. She hoped Mrs. Jewls would read a boring story with no jokes.

When she got to class, John and Joe were standing by her desk waiting for her.

"Happy birthday, Dana," said John. He was holding a present. It was wrapped in green paper and had a pink bow.

"But it's not my birthday," said Dana.

“Well, that’s okay,” said John. “You can have it anyway. Since I’m always teasing you.” He and Joe snickered.

Dana eagerly tore off the wrapping paper. Maybe John wasn’t so bad after all, she thought.

It was a box of tissues.

John and Joe laughed hysterically.

“That’s not funny!” said Dana. She raised her fist and started to chase after them.

Mrs. Jewls rang her cowbell, and all the children settled quietly in their seats.

“We are ready to begin a new story,” said Mrs. Jewls. She held up the book. “It’s called ‘Stinky.’”

Dana laughed at the title, then quickly covered her mouth.

“It’s about a cute and playful skunk,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Oh, no!” gasped Dana. She knew animal stories always made her cry. The animal’s mother would get shot by human hunters. Or else humans would build a shopping center and destroy the animal’s home.

She hated humans. But she knew that was silly, because she was a human, and so were all her friends. The only human she really hated was John, and she didn’t think he was even human!

Mrs. Jewls read:

“It was such a beautiful day, Stinky and his mother went for a walk across the forest. ‘Hi, Stinky,’ said Charlie the chipmunk. ‘Hi, Charlie,’ said Stinky. ‘Come along, Stinky,’ called his mother. Stinky hurried after her. They came to a road. Suddenly Stinky heard a noise he had never heard before. It was very loud, like thunder. A car, driven by humans, was speeding toward him! ‘Look out!’ shouted his mother. Stinky stopped in the middle of the road and stared at the onrushing car. He had never seen a car before. His mother pushed him out of the way just in time. He was safe, but unfortunately, the car ran over his mother. ‘Mama, Mama,’ he sobbed over and over again, but his mother didn’t answer. She was dead.”

Dana cried.

“Uh-oh, there goes the leaky faucet,” said John. He and Joe laughed.

Dana sniffled and wiped her eyes, but the tears wouldn’t stop. She just kept thinking about poor Stinky. What would he do without his mother? she wondered. Maybe he could go live with Charlie the chipmunk, she hoped.

She pulled a tissue out of the box John had given her and loudly blew her nose.

“There goes the foghorn,” said John.

Dana laughed into her tissue. She blew her nose again, even louder.

“It must be a very foggy day,” said John.

The next day after lunch Dana hurried up the thirty flights of stairs before the bell rang, so she could talk to Mrs. Jewls before class started.

“Yes, Dana?” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Can I leave the room when you read today?” asked Dana.

“Why?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Because I hate stories,” said Dana. “They make me laugh and cry too much.”

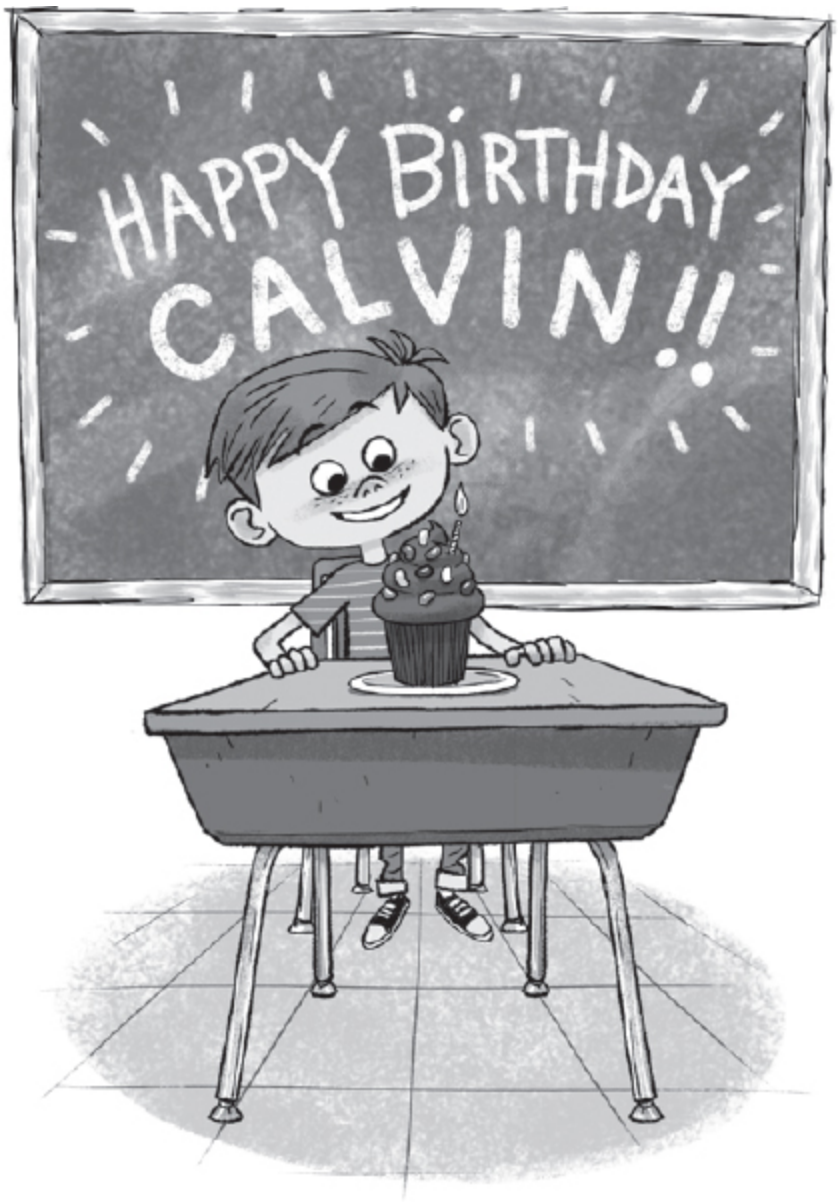
“You don’t hate stories, Dana,” Mrs. Jewls told her. “You love stories. I wish everybody laughed and cried as much as you.”

“Really?” asked Dana. She couldn’t believe it. All this time she thought she hated stories when really she loved them. She was glad she really loved stories.

Suddenly she made a face. “Oh, yuck!” she said.

“What is it?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“What if I really love John, too?”



14

Calvin’s Big Decision

It was Calvin’s birthday. His mother had made chocolate cupcakes with jelly beans on top. Mrs. Jewls passed them out to the class.

“Hey, Dana,” said Leslie. “I’ll trade you my black jelly bean for your red one.”

“Okay,” said Dana.

Everyone traded jelly beans. That was the most fun part of the party.

Bebe was very excited. “Tell everybody what you’re getting for your birthday, Calvin!” she said.

“I don’t know,” Calvin mumbled as he stared at his yellow jelly bean.

“He’s getting the best present!” said Bebe.

“What are you getting, Calvin?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

Calvin frowned. “I don’t know!” he griped. “I mean, I know what it is, but I don’t know what it is.”

“Huh?” asked Jason.

“See, I usually get toys,” Calvin tried to explain. “But they always break, or get lost, or something happens to them. But this year I’m getting something I’ll never lose. I’ll have it for the rest of my life.”

“What is it?” asked Terrence.

“A tattoo,” said Calvin.

“Oooh, how neat!” exclaimed Maurecia.

Everyone thought it was a great present.

“You’re so lucky, Calvin,” said Rondi. “I wish I could get a tattoo too! Instead I got a tutu.”

“I got a tutu too,” said Dana.

“My parents won’t let me get a tattoo,” complained John.

“My parents wouldn’t let me get one either,” said Calvin. “Then, for my birthday, they said I could get one. But now I can’t decide what to get. My dad’s taking me to the tattoo parlor after school today! I just can’t make up my mind.”

“Get a snake,” said Stephen.

“No, get an eagle,” said Deedee. “They’re the best!”

“A dead rat!” suggested Kathy.

“I just don’t know,” said Calvin. “I’ve never had to make such a tough decision. Nothing else I do matters very much. It’s not like choosing jelly beans! If you pick the wrong color jelly bean, big deal, you can always spit it out. But once you get a tattoo, you can’t change your mind. You can’t erase tattoos. Whatever I get I’ll have for the rest of my life!”

“Get a naked lady,” said Jason.

Calvin shook his head. “I just don’t know. I just don’t know.”

“Where are you going to put your tattoo?” asked Allison.

Calvin threw up his hands. “I don’t know!”

“You should put it on your arm,” said Myron. “That’s the best place for tattoos.”

“You’re crazy, Myron,” said Todd. “Put it on your chest, Calvin.”

“I know where you should put it,” said Dana. “But I can’t say.” She giggled like a maniac. Then she whispered it in Jenny’s ear. Jenny giggled too.

All day everyone had lots of suggestions for Calvin. They told him what kind of tattoo he should get, and where he should put it. A rainbow on his forehead. A flower on his cheek. An anchor on his arm.

It was easy for the others to make suggestions. They wouldn’t have to live with it for the rest of their lives.

“I just don’t know,” Calvin repeated over and over again.

Bebe drew a lot of pictures for him, in case he wanted to choose one of those. She drew lions, tigers, buffaloes, and butterflies.

“If you like one, I can draw it on your skin for you,” said Bebe. “Then the tattoo man can trace over it.”

“I just don’t know,” muttered Calvin. “I just don’t know.”

After school Calvin’s father picked him up and drove him to the tattoo parlor.

The next day when he walked into class, everybody stared at him. They couldn’t see a tattoo.

“Did you get one?” asked Maurecia.

Calvin smiled. “Yep,” he said.

“Where is it?” asked Jason.

Dana gasped. “I know where!” she exclaimed.

She and Jenny giggled.

“Well, what’d you get?” asked Todd.

“It was a real tough decision,” said Calvin. “I almost got a leopard fighting a snake. But then my dad told me to think about it. He said it was sort of like getting a second nose. You may think you want another nose, because that way if one nose gets stuffed up, you can breathe through the other nose. But then he asked me, ‘Calvin, do you really want two noses?’”

“Your father is very wise,” said Mrs. Jewls.

Calvin nodded. “That made me think,” he said. “I decided I didn’t want a snake and a leopard fighting on my body for the rest of my life. I

suddenly knew exactly what I wanted."

He pulled up his left pant leg. There was a small tattoo just above his ankle.

Everyone crowded around to look at it.

"A potato!" exclaimed Leslie. "How stupid!"

"That's the worst tattoo in the world!" said Mac.

They all thought it was a dumb tattoo.

"Anything is better than a potato!" said Jason.

"It's a pretty potato," said Bebe, trying to be nice. "I wish I could draw potatoes that good." But even Bebe thought it was a dumb tattoo.

"I like potatoes," said Calvin.

"I would hope so," said Mrs. Jewls.

Calvin could tell Mrs. Jewls didn't like his tattoo either.

"I would have gotten an eagle," said Deedee, "soaring across the sky!"

"Not me," said Terrence. "I would have gotten a lion!"

"I would have gotten a kangaroo," said Leslie.

All day everyone told Calvin what they would have gotten: a fire-breathing dragon, a lightning bolt, a creature from outer space.

None of them said they would have gotten a potato.

But Calvin knew better. He knew it was easy for his friends to say what would they have gotten, because they really hadn't had to choose. He was the only one who really knew what it was like to pick a tattoo. Even Mrs. Jewls didn't know that.

He looked at his potato. He smiled. It made him happy.

He was sure he had made the right choice.

At least he was pretty sure.

15

She’s Back!

Deedee ran across the playground screaming.

At first Louis thought she was just having fun, but then he realized something was wrong. He hurried after her and grabbed her arm.

“Deedee, are you all right?” he asked.

She stared at him wide-eyed as she continued to scream.

Several other kids gathered around. “What’s wrong with Deedee?” asked Myron.

“I don’t know,” said Louis.

Deedee hiccupped three times, then gasped, “I saw her!”

“Who?” asked Louis.

Deedee didn’t answer—she just stared right through him.

But everyone else knew whom Deedee had seen. Most of them had seen her too, during the last two weeks.

“Where was she?” asked Todd.

“On the monkey bars,” said Deedee, still trembling and breathing hard. “I was hanging upside down, and suddenly she was hanging upside down right next to me!”

“Did she wiggle her ears?” asked Jenny.

“Only one,” said Deedee. “I jumped off and ran away before she could wiggle the other one.”

“That’s good,” said Rondi.

“Who is she?” asked Louis. “A hippopotamus?”

“No!” said Myron with a laugh. “Why do you say that?”

“Because when a hippopotamus gets mad, it wiggles its ears.”

“She’s worse than a hippopotamus,” said Allison.

“I saw her last week, at the water fountain,” said Todd. “I bent down to get a drink, and then there she was, drinking at the faucet next to me.”

“I saw her on the stairs,” said Rondi. “I was going up the stairs, and she went right past me, sliding down on the banister.”

“Who?” asked Louis.

“Mrs. Gorf!” said Deedee. Just saying the name sent a shiver of fear through her body.

“Oh, your old teacher,” said Louis with a shrug. “Is she back? I always wondered what happened to her.”

The children looked at each other. Mrs. Gorf was the teacher they had had before Mrs. Jewls took over. They had never told anyone how they had gotten rid of her. They especially couldn’t tell Louis.

She was the meanest teacher in the history of Wayside School. Of course there are other teachers at other schools who are meaner.

Louis looked toward the monkey bars. “I don’t see her,” he said.

“Well, she was there,” Deedee insisted. “I saw her!”

“You just imagined you saw her, Deedee,” said Louis. “If you hate somebody, or if you love somebody, you often think you see that person when

she isn't there. It's very common. It's just like Mrs. Drazil."

"Who's Mrs. Drazil?" asked Todd.

"She was the worst teacher I ever had," said Louis. He shivered just thinking about her. "She was my teacher when I was your age. I sometimes think I see her, too. And I still have nightmares about her."

"Was she mean?" asked Rondi.

"She was *horrible!*" said Louis. "Every morning she used to check our fingernails. If they were dirty, she'd tell the whole class. 'Louis has dirty fingernails this morning,' she'd say in a really nasty voice. And if you talked in class, she would pick up the wastepaper basket and put it over your head. You had to leave it on your head until the bell rang."

"Did she ever put it over your head?" asked Todd.

"Lots of times," said Louis.

Everybody laughed.

"It wasn't funny," said Louis. "My mother always knew when I got in trouble, because I'd have bits of trash stuck in my hair."

"Did it get stuck in your mustache, too?" asked Rondi.

"Louis didn't have a mustache when he was our age!" said Allison. "Did you, Louis?" she asked.

Suddenly, Louis screamed.

Everyone stared at him.

"She's back!" he shouted, as he shook with fear. Then he slapped himself in the face. "Excuse me," he said. "Sorry. For a second I thought I saw Mrs. Drazil."

He turned to Deedee. "C'mon, let's go to the monkey bars."

"No!" declared Deedee. "I'm not going back. I'm never getting on the monkey bars again!"

Louis took hold of her hand. "Mrs. Gorf isn't there," he said. "You just imagined her."

They headed to the monkey bars. No one else dared to follow.

"If she starts to wiggle her ears, run away as fast as you can," warned Deedee. She held tightly on to Louis's hand.

When they reached the monkey bars, no one was there. "Where were you when you saw her?" Louis asked.

"I was hanging upside down over there," said Deedee, pointing.

"Okay, go hang upside down," said Louis.

"No!" exclaimed Deedee.

"Don't worry, I'll be right here in case anything happens."

It had rained during the night, so the sand under the monkey bars was wet and somewhat hard.

Deedee walked across the sand and pulled herself up on the bar. She hooked her legs over, then hung from her knees.

“Well, do you see her?” Louis asked.

„Thanks, said Deedee. „No, it’s safe now,“ said Deedee. „Thanks,

Louis. I guess you’re right. I must have seen my

shadow or something.“

Deedee pulled herself right side up, then hopped down from the monkey bars. She and Louis walked away hand in hand. She held Louis’s hand not because she was scared, but because she liked him.

“Mrs. Drazil sounds almost as bad as Mrs. Gorf,” said Deedee.

“She was,” said Louis. “She once made me put gum on my nose, because I was chewing it in class.”

“How can you chew your nose?” asked Deedee.

Behind them, Deedee’s footprints could be seen in the wet sand under the monkey bars. There was also another set of footprints, made by a person who had much bigger feet.

16

Love and a Dead Rat

Dameon was in love with one of the girls in his class. Can you guess which one?

He thought about her all the time.

Myron threw a red ball to Dameon. It bounced off his face.

"Huh?" said Dameon.

"Why didn't you catch the ball?" asked Myron.

"What ball?" asked Dameon.

"The one that hit you in the face," said Myron.

"Did a ball hit me in the face?" asked Dameon.

"Yes," said Myron.

"Oh, good," said Dameon. "I was wondering why my nose hurt."

He had been thinking about the girl he loved.

He was in love with Mrs. Jewls.

That was why he was always doing things for her, like passing out papers. He thought she was very pretty and nice. He thought she was smart, too. In fact, he thought she was one of the smartest people in the class.

After recess he hurried back up the stairs.

"Hello, Dameon," said Mrs. Jewls.

"Hello, Mrs. Jewls," he said.

"You're always the first one here, aren't you?" asked Mrs. Jewls.

Dameon blushed and shrugged his shoulders. "Do you need any papers passed out or anything?" he asked.

"It's so nice of you to ask," said Mrs. Jewls.

"I think you're nice too," said Dameon.

Mrs. Jewls gave him a stack of workbooks to hand out. Then she gave him a Tootsie Roll Pop from the coffee can on her desk for being so helpful. "But don't eat it until after lunch," she said.

"I won't," he assured her.

He ate lunch with Myron and D.J. He saved his Tootsie Roll Pop for last.

Joy and Maurecia came up behind him.

"Hi, Dameon," said Joy. "How's your *girlfriend*?"

"What?" asked Dameon. He turned red. "Who are you talking about? I don't have a girlfriend!"

"You're in love with Mrs. Jewls!" accused Maurecia.

"You better watch out," said Joy. "Mister Jewls might come after you."

The two girls laughed.

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Dameon. "I'm not in love with Mrs. Jewls!" He looked to his friends for support.

Myron shrugged.

D.J. smiled.

“Prove it!” said Joy. “Prove you’re not in love with her.”

“That’s stupid,” said Dameon. “How can I prove I’m not in love with Mrs. Jewls?”

“Give her this,” said Joy. She handed Dameon a paper bag.

“Your lunch?” asked Dameon.

“Look inside,” said Maurecia.

Inside the paper bag was a dead rat.

Dameon knew Mrs. Jewls hated dead rats more than anything in the world.

“Put it in her desk,” said Joy.

“If you don’t, it means you love her,” said Maurecia.

“I’m not in love with her,” said Dameon.

“Prove it,” said Joy.

“Okay, I will!” said Dameon.

The girls left.

“You don’t have to put the dead rat in her desk,” said D. J.

“We don’t care,” said Myron.

“You think I’m in love with her too, don’t you?” asked Dameon.

Myron shrugged.

D.J. smiled.

“Some friends you are!” said Dameon. “I’ll show you!”

After lunch he was the first one back in class. He carried Joy’s paper sack.

“Hello, Dameon,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Did you have a nice lunch?”

“It was all right,” he muttered.

“Oh, would you mind getting the construction paper from the closet and putting it on my desk?” asked Mrs. Jewls. “Thank you.”

Dameon went to the closet and got the construction paper. He put it on her desk. Then, when she wasn’t looking he opened her desk drawer and dumped the dead rat into it. He shut the drawer.

“Thank you, Dameon,” said Mrs. Jewls. “You’re always so helpful. It’s such a pleasure to have you in my class.”

Dameon felt awful.

Mrs. Jewls read a story to the class.

Dameon couldn’t pay attention. He kept wondering when she’d open her drawer.

After the story they had art. Everyone was supposed to make snowflakes.

Dameon folded his piece of construction paper in half.

Mrs. Jewls screamed.

“What’s wrong, Mrs. Jewls?” asked Joy.

“Somebody put a dead rat in my desk,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“I did!” declared Dameon.

“Dameon?” Mrs. Jewls said with great surprise. “Why?”

“Because I hate you!” said Dameon. “You’re always making me do things for you.”

“Oh, I see,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Should I write my name on the board under DISCIPLINE?” he asked.

“No, that won’t be necessary,” said Mrs. Jewls.

That made him feel even worse. Why did I have to prove myself to Joy? he wondered. I don’t like Joy. I like Mrs. Jewls. He felt rotten.

When the bell rang, Dameon waited for all the other kids to leave. Then he walked to Mrs. Jewls’s desk.

She was grading papers. “Yes, Dameon?”

“Do you want me to erase the board for you?” he asked.

“That’s all right,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I’ll do it myself.”

Dameon sadly walked out of the room and down the stairs. When he reached the bottom, he turned and ran all the way back up to Mrs. Jewls’s room.

She was just putting on her coat.

“I love you, Mrs. Jewls!” Dameon declared. “I’m sorry I put the dead rat in your desk. I did it because I didn’t want everyone to know I loved you. I’m sorry.”

“I love you, too, Dameon,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“You do? But what about Mister Jewls?”

“Just because I love Mister Jewls, it doesn’t mean I can’t also love you. Love is different from most things.” She picked up a piece of chalk. “If I gave my piece of chalk to someone, then I wouldn’t have it anymore. But when I give my love to someone, I end up with more love than I started with. The more love you give away, the more you have left.”

Dameon smiled. “I love you, Mrs. Jewls,” he said. He felt his heart fill up with more love.

“I love you, Dameon,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“This is getting disgusting!” said the dead rat. It climbed out of Mrs. Jewls’s desk and walked out of the room.

17

What?

It was purple.

So Jenny read the story backward. When she finished, she threw up.

"Okay," said Jenny.

"So read the story backward," suggested Mrs. Jewls. "That way the beginning will be a surprise."

"But I already know how the story ends!" Jenny complained. "I only like stories with surprise endings."

"Good point," said Mrs. Jewls. "Here, you can read the story yourself. It's very funny." She gave the book to Jenny.

“All I heard was the last sentence,” said Jenny. “It isn’t funny unless you know what happened first.”

“Why aren’t you laughing, Jenny?” asked Mrs. Jewls. “Didn’t you think it was a funny story?”

That made Dana laugh harder.

“There goes the giggle box,” said Myron.

Everybody laughed, except for Jenny. Dana laughed hysterically.

Mrs. Jewls looked back at the story she had been reading before Jenny’s interruption. There was only one sentence left for her to read. She read it to the class.

Jenny made a face. She could still taste the awful stuff.

“And next time you’ll drink your prune juice more quickly,” said Mrs. Jewls.

Jenny sat down.

Mrs. Jewls waited for Jenny to sit down.

Jenny wrote her name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

“Well, that’s no excuse,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Now, go write your name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.”

“I couldn’t leave the table until I finished it,” explained Jenny. “And then I missed the bus.”

“What does prune juice have to do with anything?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Because I hate prune juice!” Jenny griped.

“Why are you late?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“I can’t hear you,” said Jenny. “I better take off my helmet.” She took off her helmet.

“Take off your helmet,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“What?” asked Jenny.

“Why are you late?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

Jenny caught her breath. “What?” she asked. She couldn’t hear too well because she was still wearing the motorcycle helmet.

Mrs. Jewls looked up from the story she had been reading to the class. “You’re late,” she said.

She hopped off the bike in front of Wayside School and charged up the stairs. Her stomach was still going up and down as she opened the door to Mrs. Jewls’s room.

She put on her helmet; then her father drove her to school on the back of his motorcycle. It was a very bumpy ride.

“Put on your helmet,” said her father. “I’ll drive you to school on the back of my motorcycle.”

“I missed the bus,” Jenny grumbled.

“What are you doing home?” asked her mother.

She finally got it all down, then hurried as fast as she could to the bus stop. When she got there, the bus was just pulling away. She sighed, then turned around and ran all the way back home.

Her mother wouldn’t let her leave the breakfast table until she finished her prune juice. It took her forever. She hated prune juice more than anything in the world.

One day Jenny was late for school.

18

The Substitute

Benjamin couldn’t take it any longer. Today was the day he would finally tell Mrs. Jewls his real name. So what if nobody likes me? he thought. So what if I stop getting high marks?

“Hi, Mark,” said Jason.

“Hi, Mark,” said Stephen.

“Hi, hi,” he glumly replied, then started up the stairs.

“Hi, Mark,” said Bebe as he took his seat next to her. “Guess what? We have a substitute!”

“Yahoooo!” shouted Maurecia.

Everyone in Mrs. Jewls’s class loved it when they had substitute teachers. They loved playing mean and horrible tricks on them.

Benjamin frowned. He finally had the courage to tell Mrs. Jewls his real name. “Rats!” he said.

“That’s a good idea!” said Terrence. “We’ll put dead rats in her desk!”

“Let’s trick her into going outside,” said Joy, “then lock her out of the room.”

“But what if she tells Mr. Kidswatter?” asked Eric Fry.

“So what?” said Joy. “She’ll have to go all the way down to the office, and then all the way back up. By then we’ll unlock the door. Mr. Kidswatter will think she’s bonkers!”

Benjamin looked at the substitute teacher sitting at Mrs. Jewls’s desk. She looked like a nice lady. She wore tiny spectacles and had long gray hair tied in a ponytail. He felt sorry for her, and he felt sorry for himself. I was going to tell Mrs. Jewls my name, he thought. I really was!

The substitute stood up and walked to the center of the room. “Good morning,” she said. “My name is Mrs. Franklin.”

Nobody said “Good morning” back to her.

Calvin handed Benjamin a note: *At ten o’clock drop your book on the floor. Pass it on.*

Benjamin read it, then passed it on to Todd.

“Okay, who can tell me what page we’re on?” asked Mrs. Franklin.

“Page seventeen,” called Myron.

“A hundred and twelve,” said Maurecia.

“Ninety-eight,” said Eric Ovens.

“Three thousand,” said Joe.

Mrs. Franklin smiled. “I guess well have to study all those pages,” she said.

Benjamin raised his hand.

“Yes, the handsome young man in the red shirt,” said the substitute.

He told her the correct page. “We’re on page one hundred and two,” he said.

“Thank you,” said the substitute. “And what is your name, please?”

Benjamin thought a moment. He looked around the room, then boldly told the truth. “My name is Benjamin!” he stated proudly.

Several kids snickered.

“Thank you, Benjamin,” said the substitute.

There were more snickers.

“You’re welcome,” said Benjamin. He felt good, even if the other other kids were laughing at him.

Mrs. Franklin asked a question from page 102.

Jason answered it correctly.

“Very good,” said the substitute. “And what is your name, please?”

Jason looked around. “Benjamin!” he asserted.

Half the class giggled.

“Thank you, Benjamin,” said Mrs. Franklin.

The other half giggled.

Dana answered the next question.

“And what’s your name?” Mrs. Franklin asked Dana.

“Benjamin!” Dana blurted, then fell giggling onto the floor.

“Thank you, Benjamin,” said the substitute.

Everyone was hysterical.

“My, it is certainly a pleasure to teach such happy students,” said the substitute. “Who knows the answer to question four?”

They all raised their hands. They all wanted to tell the substitute their names were Benjamin.

They were having so much fun, they forgot to drop their books at ten o’clock.

At recess everyone congratulated Benjamin on his great trick.

“You’re a genius, Mark,” said Todd.

“Benjamin is such a funny name,” said Jason. “How’d you ever think of it?”

“But my name really is Benjamin,” said Benjamin.

“So is mine,” said Stephen.

“Mine too,” said Leslie.

They all laughed.

“Do you think she really believes we’re all named Benjamin?” asked Eric Ovens.

“Probably,” said Joy. “She’s so stupid!”

“If she thought we were lying, she would have gotten mad,” said Eric Bacon.

The bell rang, and they all hurried back to class.

After recess was social studies.

“Who would like to read?” asked Mrs. Franklin.

Every hand went up.

“Okay, Benjamin,” said Mrs. Franklin as she pointed at Dana.

Everyone laughed.

Dana giggled a few seconds, then got control of herself and read from the book.

“Thank you, Benjamin,” said the substitute when Dana finished reading. “Okay, Benjamin, you may read next,” she said, pointing at Terrence.

Everyone laughed.

It was the first time all year Terrence had volunteered to read.

All day, everyone paid very close attention. They all wanted the teacher to call on them. Because as funny as it was when Mrs. Franklin called somebody else Benjamin, it was even funnier when she called you Benjamin.

So everyone worked hard and listened closely. As a result, they learned more from the substitute in a day than they usually learned from Mrs. Jewls in a month.

When the final bell rang, everyone crowded around her desk.

“Are you coming back tomorrow, Mrs. Franklin?” asked Eric Bacon.

“Please, Mrs. Franklin, say you will,” pleaded Kathy.

“You’re the best substitute teacher we’ve ever had!” said Jason.

The substitute smiled. “School is over,” she said. “You don’t have to call me Mrs. Franklin anymore. That sounds so formal. Since we’re friends now, you may call me by my first name.”

“What is your first name?” asked Maurecia.

The substitute gathered up her things and put them in a straw bag. “Benjamin,” she said, then walked out of the room.

Everyone stared silently after her.

“Do you think that’s really her name?” asked Joy.

19

A Bad Case of the Sillies

Allison started up the stairs five minutes before the bell rang for school to start. The stairs were completely empty. Allison liked it that way. When

the bell rang, the stairs would be crammed with a thousand screaming kids scurrying to their rooms, but now it was nice and peaceful.

She walked up past the eighteenth story and toward the twentieth. There was no nineteenth story in Wayside School. Miss Zarves taught the class on the nineteenth story. There was no Miss Zarves.

Allison didn't understand it. If there was no nineteenth story, then wasn't her class really on the twenty-ninth?

Suddenly she heard footsteps charging up behind her. She turned around to see Ron and Deedee racing.

She leaned against the wall to get out of their way, but Deedee stamped on her foot; then Ron's elbow jammed her in the stomach.

"Umph!" she grunted, as she fell and rolled down three steps.

Deedee and Ron didn't even stop to say they were sorry.

Allison slowly stood up. Fortunately she wasn't hurt, but her windbreaker was torn.

She thought Ron and Deedee were silly. They race up the stairs, and then when they get to Mrs. Jewls's room they're too pooped to learn anything.

Allison thought all the kids in Mrs. Jewls's class were silly, even Rondi, and Rondi was her best friend. Then there was Jason, who was always pestering her. That was because Jason hated her. Or else he loved her. Allison wasn't sure which.

When she got to class, Deedee and Ron were sitting with their heads flat on their desks and their tongues hanging out.

"You could have said you were sorry," Allison said as she walked past them. She sat up straight in her chair, folded her hands on her desk, and waited as everyone else wandered in.

Jason entered the room carrying a glass bowl with a goldfish swimming inside it. "Look what I brought!" he said.

"What's the name of your goldfish?" asked Mrs. Jewls.

"Shark!" said Jason.

Everyone laughed. Allison rolled her eyes.

"It makes him feel important," Jason explained. "Where should I put him?"

"How about on top of the coat closet?" suggested Mrs. Jewls.

Jason had to stand on a chair on his tiptoes. He held the bowl at the very bottom as he tried to nudge it over the edge of the closet.

Suddenly the chair toppled over. “Aaaaaahh-gulp!” yelled Jason as he fell on the floor. He was holding the bowl upside down above his wet face.

Mrs. Jewls hurried to the back of the room. “Quick, somebody fill the bowl with water,” she said. “Where’s Shark?”

Jason made a face. “I swallowed him.”

The class went crazy.

What a show-off, thought Allison.

Mrs. Jewls rang her cowbell and told everyone to settle down. “You have a bad case of the sillies this morning,” she said.

She took roll. “Who’s absent?” she asked.

“Allison,” said Rondi.

“Very funny, Rondi,” said Allison.

“Anybody besides Allison?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“I’m here, Mrs. Jewls,” said Allison. She sat behind Eric Fry, so she thought Mrs. Jewls couldn’t see her. Eric Fry was the biggest kid in the class.

“Just Allison,” said Mrs. Jewls. She marked it on her green roll card. “Dameon, will you please take the roll card to the office.”

Allison stood up. “I’m not absent,” she said.

Dameon took the roll card and walked out the door.

“Mrs. Jewls, did you just mark me absent?” asked Allison.

Mrs. Jewls didn’t answer her.

Allison marched to her desk. “Mrs. Jewls, did you mark me absent?” she asked again.

Mrs. Jewls looked up. “Terrence, what are you whispering about?”

“Nothing,” mumbled Terrence.

“If you can say it to Jenny, you can say it to me,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Get off my case, Buzzard Face!” said Terrence.

“Terrence!” exclaimed Mrs. Jewls. “Go write your name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.”

“But that’s what I said to Jenny,” Terrence protested.

“Mrs. Jewls, what about me?” Allison demanded.

Mrs. Jewls ignored her.

Allison screamed as loud as she could.

Mrs. Jewls didn’t hear her.

Allison faced the class. “Can’t anybody see me?” she asked.

Nobody answered her.

“Rondi?” shouted Allison. “Dana? Jason?”

“This isn’t funny,” said Allison. “I know you’re all just pretending.” She stood right in front of Jason, leaned over his desk, and stared him straight in the eye. “I know you can see me,” she said. “You’re trying not to laugh.”

He stared right through her.

She stuck out her tongue at him.

He leaned forward, causing Allison’s tongue to lick his nose.

“Yuck!” she exclaimed, then wiped her tongue on her sleeve.

Mrs. Jewls began the morning lesson.

“Have you gone crazy?” shouted Allison. She ran out of the room and down to the class on the twenty-ninth story. “Come quick,” she said. “There’s something wrong with Mrs. Jewls’s class.”

No one heard her.

She slammed the door, then continued down the stairs to the class on the twenty-eighth floor. No one saw her there, either.

Tears streamed down her cheeks. Is the whole school playing a joke on me? she wondered. “It’s not funny!” she shouted as loud as she could.

She continued down the stairs, screaming anything that came to her head, hoping that someone, somewhere, would notice her.

“Fish for sale! Fresh fish! Fat fish! Get your fresh, fat fish!”

A tall, skinny lady with very short hair stepped out of one of the classrooms. “Sh!” she whispered. “This is a school, not a fish market!”

“You can hear me?” asked Allison. She was so happy, she wanted to hug her.

“Yes, I can hear you,” the woman said sternly. “My whole class can hear you. You’re making it impossible for us to get any work done.”

“I’m sorry,” said Allison. “But something’s wrong in Mrs. Jewls’s class.”

“You’d better come in here,” said the teacher.

Allison followed the teacher into her classroom.

“What’s your name?” the teacher asked her.

“Allison.”

“Boys and girls, this is Allison,” the teacher announced to her students. “She’ll be joining our class.”

“What?” said Allison. “But—”

“My name is Miss Zarves,” said the teacher. “Welcome to the nineteenth story.”

19

A Wonderful Teacher

Allison was still on the nineteenth story.

The desks were arranged in clusters of four. Allison sat at a cluster with a girl named Virginia, a boy named Nick, and a boy named Ray.

But Virginia looked old enough to be her mother. And Nick looked like he should be in high school. Ray was a couple of years younger than Allison.

“Miss Zarves is a wonderful teacher,” said Virginia in a singsong voice. “She’s the nicest teacher I ever had.”

“She’s the *only* teacher you ever had,” said Nick.

“So? She’s still nice,” said Virginia. “I’ve always gotten all A’s.”

“Aren’t you a little old to be going to school?” Allison asked her.

“You’re never to old to learn,” said Virginia.

“No one ever leaves Miss Zarves’s class,” said Nick. “How long have you been here, Virginia?”

Virginia thought a moment. “Thirty-two wonderful years.”

“I’ve been here nine years,” said Nick.

“But she always gives us good grades,” said Virginia.

“That’s true,” Nick agreed. “I’ve gotten all A’s since I’ve been here too.”

“Me too,” said Ray. “And sometimes I answer all the problems wrong on purpose!”

“Where were you before you came here?” Allison asked him.

“I went to, um, I was . . .” Ray shook his head. “That’s funny—I don’t remember.”

“I don’t remember where I came from either,” said Virginia.

“Well, I do!” said Allison. “I was in . . .” But suddenly she couldn’t remember either. Then it came to her. “Mrs. Jewls’s class! And Rondi was in the class, and Jason, and Dana, and Todd . . .”

She named every member of the class, including all three Erics. She didn’t want to forget where she came from. If I forget where I came from, I might never get back, she thought.

“Did you say there was a girl named Bebe Gunn?” asked Ray.

“Yes,” said Allison. “Bebe’s a very good artist.”

“My last name is Gunn, too,” said Ray. “I wonder if we’re related.”

“Ray, no talking please,” said Miss Zarves. “Now, everyone please take out a pencil and some paper. I want you to write all the numbers from zero to a million in alphabetical order.”

“From zero to a million?” asked Allison. She couldn’t believe it.

“Don’t worry,” said Virginia. “If you run out of paper, Miss Zarves has more in the closet.”

Allison stared at her in horror. “But it will take over a hundred years,” she said.

“So?” asked Virginia. “What’s your hurry?”

Allison started to work. It was bad enough having to write down all the numbers from zero to a million, but she couldn’t imagine how she’d ever put them in alphabetical order.

One came before two.

Three came after one, but before two.

Four came before one.

Five came before four.

Six came after one, but before three.

“Don’t worry,” said Virginia. “Even if you miss a few, Miss Zarves will give you an A when you finish.”

Seven came after one and before six.

Eight came first. Allison couldn’t think of any number that would come before eight, so she wrote it down. She also knew zero would come last, if she ever got that far. By then she’d be older than Virginia.

I’ll talk to Louis at recess, she thought. He’ll save me.

“When’s recess?” she asked.

“There is no recess,” said Ray. “We’re not allowed out of the classroom.”

“What about if you have to go to the bathroom?”

“What’s a bathroom?” asked Virginia.

“We don’t eat, either,” said Nick. “We just work all the time.”

“But we never have homework,” Virginia said cheerfully.

“That’s because we never go home,” said Nick. “We get a two-minute break every eleven hours.”

“But don’t worry,” said Virginia. “Miss Zarves always gives us good grades.”

Miss Zarves walked around the room checking everybody’s work. “Excellent, Ray!” she said. “Very good, Virginia. You’re doing wonderfully, Allison. You get an A for the day.”

Big deal! thought Allison. She had to figure out some way out of there. It was clear that Virginia, Nick, and Ray were all too far gone to help her.

“Are there any other new kids in the class?” she asked.

“Ben’s new,” said Nick. He pointed Ben out to her.

Ben appeared to be about Allison’s age. She was glad about that. When the two-minute break came, she went over and talked to him.

“Are you Ben?” she asked.

“No,” he said.

“Oh,” said Allison. “I was looking for Ben.”

“That’s me,” said the boy.

“But you just said—”

“My name’s Mark Miller,” said the boy. “But for some reason everybody calls me Benjamin Nushmutt.”

“There’s a Mark Miller in my class!” exclaimed Allison.

“I know, that’s me,” said Mark. “I’m Mark Miller.”

“No, I mean my other class,” said Allison.

“What other class?”

Allison thought a moment. “I don’t remember. . . .” she said.

After putting numbers in alphabetical order for eleven hours, her brain had turned into spaghetti.

“Time’s up,” said Miss Zarves. “Everyone back to work.”

19

Forever Is Never

Allison was still stuck on the nineteenth story.

Fourteen two-minute breaks had passed.

“It’s dictionary time,” said Miss Zarves.

Everybody got out a dictionary. Allison found a dictionary in her desk, too.

“What are we supposed to do with it?” she asked.

“Memorize it,” said Nick.

“But that’s impossible!” said Allison.

“No, it’s easy,” Virginia assured her. “You memorize one word at a time, until you get a whole page. Then you go on to the next page.”

“How many words have you memorized?” asked Allison.

“I’m almost finished with the B’s,” Virginia said proudly. “And I’ve only been doing it for thirty-two years!”

Allison opened her dictionary. *Mrs. Jewls’s class!* she suddenly remembered. She sighed with relief. For the last six days she’d been trying to remember where she came from.

In her mind she went through everybody in her former class. She didn’t want to forget again. As she thought about each person, tears filled her eyes. She missed them very much. Even Jason. They were all so wonderful in their own special ways.

When the two-minute break came, she talked to Mark again. He was the only person in the class who still seemed to have a brain.

“How did we get here?” she asked.

“Maybe we’re dead,” said Mark. “Maybe we died and went to—”

“This isn’t Heaven!” said Allison.

“That wasn’t what I was going to say,” said Mark.

Allison felt a chill run up her spine. She looked at Miss Zarves. Miss Zarves smiled back at her.

“But she seems so nice,” said Allison. “Could someone as nice as her really be the devil?”

“I don’t know,” said Mark. “She always gives good grades.”

“What would happen if we didn’t do our work?” asked Allison.

“We have to do our work,” said Mark.

“Why?” asked Allison. “What’s Miss Zarves going to do to us—keep us after school?”

“‘I don’t know,” said Mark. “Teachers can always find new ways to punish you. They’re experts at it.”

“Your two minutes are up, boys and girls,” announced Miss Zarves. “Everyone back to work.”

Allison returned to her seat. She tried to figure it all out, but she had so much busy work to do, she didn't have time to think.

That's her plan! Allison suddenly realized. She shivered as it all came together for her. Miss Zarves assigns us lots of busy work so we don't have time to think. She makes us memorize stupid things so that we don't think about the important things. And then she gives us good grades to keep us happy.

Miss Zarves walked around the room. "Very good, Virginia," she said. "You are doing so well. Excellent, Ray! Good job, Nick." She stopped when she got to Allison. "Allison, why aren't you working?"

Allison looked at her. She knew Mark was right. Teachers are experts at finding ways to punish you. And if Miss Zarves was the devil, who knew what she might have up her sleeve? Still, Allison had to take a chance. If she wanted to get back to Mrs. Jewls's class, she had to act as if she were in Mrs. Jewls's class.

She took off her shoes and socks, sat on the floor, and sucked her toes.

"Allison, what are you doing?" asked Miss Zarves.

Allison took her toe out of her mouth. "Get off my case, Buzzard Face," she said.

Miss Zarves was furious. "Return to your desk, young lady!" she ordered.

Allison returned to her desk. But instead of sitting at it, she climbed on top of it and sang a song.

"I got one sock!
Lookin' for the other.
One sock!
Lookin' for its brother.
When I find that sock!
I'll tell you what I'll do.
I'll put it on my foot,
and I'll stick it in my shoe!"

Mark Miller smiled at her and silently clapped his hands. Everyone else looked at her like she was crazy.

"Your socks are on the floor, next to your shoes," Miss Zarves said coldly. "I'll give you ten seconds to put them on your feet. Ten . . . nine . . .

eight . . . seven . . .”

Allison climbed down from her desk. She picked up her socks and put them on her ears. “How’s this?” she asked.

“Six . . . five . . . four . . .”

“Albert Einstein didn’t wear socks,” said Allison. “Why should I?”

“Three . . . two . . .”

Allison closed her eyes.

“One!”

She felt something slam down on her foot. Something else jammed into her stomach. “Umph!” she grunted as she fell and rolled down three steps.

“Are you all right?” asked Deedee.

“Huh?” said Allison. She was on the stairs, somewhere between the eighteenth and twentieth stories.

“Sorry,” said Ron. “I didn’t see you. Deedee and I were racing up the stairs, and then you suddenly appeared.”

“You knocked off her shoes and socks!” exclaimed Deedee.

“Oh, I ripped your windbreaker, too,” said Ron. “I’m sorry.”

“That’s okay,” said Allison. She picked up her shoes and socks. “Race you up the stairs!”

All three ran up to Mrs. Jewls’s room. When they got there, they were so pooped, they sat with their heads flat on their desks and their tongues hanging out.

“Hi, Allison,” said Rondi.

Allison raised her head. “Hi, Rondi,” she said happily. “What did I miss while I was absent?”

“When were you absent?” asked Rondi. “Hey, how come you’re not wearing your shoes and socks?”

Allison hung her socks from her ears. “What do you think?” she asked. “It’s the new look!”

Rondi laughed.

“Allison,” said Mrs. Jewls, “you seem to have a bad case of the sillies this morning.”

Allison giggled.

Jason entered the room carrying a glass bowl with a goldfish swimming inside it. “Look what I brought!” he said.

“What’s the name of your goldfish?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Shark!” said Jason.

Everyone laughed.

“It makes him feel important,” Jason explained. “Where should I put him?”

“How about on top of the coat closet?” suggested Mrs. Jewls.

Jason had to stand on a chair on his tiptoes. He held the bowl at the very bottom as he tried to nudge it over the edge of the closet.

Allison turned around to watch. She didn’t want to miss this!

20, 21, & 22

Eric, Eric, & Eric

Mr. Kidswatter's voice crackled over the loudspeaker. "MRS. JEWLS. SEND ERIC TO MY OFFICE, AT ONCE!" He sounded mad.

Mrs. Jewls was confused. "When did we get a loudspeaker?" she asked.

"Louis put it in yesterday," said Jenny.

Mrs. Jewls was still confused. There were three Erics in her class. She didn't know which one Mr. Kidswatter meant.

Eric Fry was fat, but not short.

Eric Bacon was short, but not fat.

Eric Ovens was short and fat.

Mrs. Jewls chose the biggest Eric. "Eric Fry, Mr. Kidswatter wants to see you."

Eric Fry trembled as he slowly stood up.

The other two Erics smiled.

The principal's office was on the first floor. It's not fair, Eric thought as he headed down to his doom. Anytime any Eric does something wrong, I'm the one who gets in trouble.

He stood in front of the principal's door. His heart beat very fast. He took a couple of breaths, then knocked lightly.

"Enter!" boomed Mr. Kidswatter.

Eric turned the doorknob. He took one step inside, then stood with his back against the wall, as far away from Mr. Kidswatter as he could get.

Mr. Kidswatter sat behind an enormous desk. He wore mirrored sunglasses so Eric couldn't tell where he was looking. "Sit down, Eric," he said.

Eric moved to the small metal chair in front of the desk. A bare light bulb hung above his head.

Mr. Kidswatter cracked his knuckles. "We can do this the easy way, or we can do this the hard way," he said. "It's your choice."

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Eric. "I didn't do anything."

"So it's the hard way, is it?" asked Mr. Kidswatter. "Very well. You'll talk. One way or another, you'll tell me everything I want to know."

"But—"

Mr. Kidswatter pounded his fist on his desk. "When was the last time you sharpened your pencil?"

Eric tried to remember, but he was too nervous to think. "Um, wait, let me think," he stammered. "We had a spelling test on Friday, but I borrowed—"

"Where were you yesterday afternoon, at a quarter past twelve?" asked Mr. Kidswatter.

“Yesterday?” asked Eric. “I was here, at Wayside School. I remember I ate lunch and then I played kickball.”

Mr. Kidswatter smiled. “Do you kick with your left foot?” he asked.

“No, I’m right-footed,” said Eric Fry.

“Hmph!” grumbled Mr. Kidswatter. “Have you ever gotten your hair cut at Charley’s Barber Shop?”

“Yes,” said Eric. “Two weeks ago.”

“Aha!” said Mr. Kidswatter. “So you admit it! Do you know what a Mugworm Griblick is?”

Eric Fry turned pale. “No, please!” he begged. “I didn’t do it! I’m innocent! You’ve got the wrong Eric. There are two other Erics in my class.”

Mr. Kidswatter scowled. “So that’s the way you’re going to play it, is it? Well, that’s fine with me. I’ve got all the time in the world.”

He flicked on the microphone. “MRS. JEWLS! SEND ME ANOTHER ERIC!”

Twenty-nine floors above them, Mrs. Jewls looked at the two remaining Erics.

“Okay, Eric Ovens,” she said.

Eric Ovens shivered. His eyes filled with tears.

Why me? he asked himself over and over again as he walked down the stairs. It’s my parents’ fault! Why did they have to name me Eric? Why couldn’t they name me Osgood?

He tapped on the door to the principal’s office.

“Come in!” bellowed Mr. Kidswatter.

Eric Ovens gulped, then walked inside. He sat in the little chair in front of Mr. Kidswatter’s enormous desk.

Eric Fry was nowhere to be seen.

“Wh-what ha-happened to Eric Fry?” he asked

“I’ll ask the questions!” barked Mr. Kidswatter. “But don’t worry, Eric,” he said gently. “You have nothing to fear. So long as you tell the truth.” He cracked his knuckles.

Eric Ovens was very scared. Mrs. Jewls always said that there was more than one answer to every question. He hoped he gave Mr. Kidswatter the right ones.

“Did you have a spelling test last Friday?” Mr. Kidswatter asked.

“Yes,” said Eric Ovens. “How did you know that?”

“I have my ways,” Mr. Kidswatter said slyly, behind his mirrored glasses. “When was the last time you sharpened your pencil?”

“This morning,” said Eric Ovens. “Maurecia accidentally stepped on it and—”

“Did you play kickball yesterday at a quarter after twelve?”

“No, I played tetherball.”

“Right- or left-handed?”

“Right.”

Mr. Kidswatter tossed a stapler at him.

Eric caught it with his right hand.

Mr. Kidswatter scowled. “Okay, Eric, tell me this. Have you ever gotten your hair cut at Charley’s Barber Shop?”

“No, but I will. I’ll go right now if you want.”

“You’re not going anywhere!” shouted Mr. Kidswatter. “Have you ever heard of a Mugworm Griblick?”

Eric Ovens screamed.

Upstairs, Mrs. Jewls heard Mr. Kidswatter’s voice resound over the loudspeaker. “MRS. JEWLS, SEND ME THE LAST ERIC!”

“On my way!” said Eric Bacon. He hopped out of his chair and bounced down the stairs.

He didn’t bother knocking on Mr. Kidswatter’s door: He just walked right in. “What can I do for you?” he asked.

There was no sign of Eric Ovens.

“Have a seat,” said Mr. Kidswatter. “I just want to ask you a few questions.”

“Sure thing,” said Eric Bacon. He sat in the little chair. He leaned back with his hands behind his head and his feet up on Mr. Kidswatter’s desk.

He looked at himself in Mr. Kidswatter’s mirrored glasses, took a comb out of his back pocket, and combed his hair. His hair was very neat and trim. He had gotten it cut yesterday, at 12:15, at Charley’s Barber Shop.

Mr. Kidswatter cracked his knuckles. “When’s the last time you sharpened your pencil?” he asked.

“November eleventh,” Eric Bacon answered right away. “It was three minutes before five o’clock in the afternoon. I remember because my watch stopped.”

“Where were you yesterday at twelve fifteen?”

“I was in the garden, having tea.”

“Did Maurecia step on somebody’s pencil this morning?” asked Mr. Kidswatter.

“Yes.”

“Whose?”

“She stepped on everybody’s pencil,” said Eric Bacon.

“Are you left-handed or right-footed?” demanded Mr. Kidswatter.

“I write with my left foot, and I kick with my right hand,” replied Eric Bacon.

Mr. Kidswatter scowled. “Have you ever gotten your hair cut at Charley’s Barber Shop?”

“No, I never get my hair cut,” said Eric Bacon. “I’m bald. This is a wig.”

Mr. Kidswatter took off his glasses and glared at him. “Do the words ‘Mugworm Griblick’ mean anything to you?”

Eric Bacon shook his head. “I can look it up in the dictionary if you want.”

Mr. Kidswatter shook his head. “I tried that,” he said. “It’s not there.” He rubbed his chin. “Okay, boys, you can come out now.”

Eric Ovens and Eric Fry crawled out from under the desk.

Mr. Kidswatter looked at each Eric. “One of you is lying,” he said. “I don’t know who it is, but I’ll find out. And when I do, whoever it is will be very sorry. Now I’ll give you one last chance to come clean.”

Eric Fry trembled.

Eric Ovens shivered.

“C’mon, let’s blow this Popsicle stand,” said Eric Bacon. He walked out of the room. The other two Erics followed.

Mr. Kidswatter rubbed the back of his neck. He looked at the white card on top of his desk. On one side it said:

CHARLEY’S BARBER SHOP

Under that, in blue ink, it said:

Eric, Tuesday, 12:15

He turned the card over. On the other side, a left-handed person had written with a sharp pencil:

Mr. Kidswatter is a Mugworm Griblick.

23

Teeth

Something terrible happened. Rondi grew two new front teeth.

Rondi was afraid nobody would think she was cute anymore.

Mrs. Jewls was giving a health lesson. “Always brush your teeth,” she said, “and remember to scrub behind your ears.”

“But I’ll get toothpaste in my ear!” exclaimed Todd.

Everyone laughed. Except Rondi. She didn’t want anybody to see her teeth. She hadn’t smiled for a week.

Mrs. Jewls made Todd write his name on the board under the word DISCIPLINE.

At recess Rondi decided to tell Louis her problem.

Louis was talking to Deedee.

“Do you have any green balls left?” asked Deedee.

“I’m sorry, I’ve already given them all away,” said Louis.

“That’s not fair!” said Deedee. “Why don’t you ever save one for me?”

“You know I can’t do that,” said Louis. “If I save a ball for you, then all the other kids will want me to save balls for them, too.”

“Thanks for nothing, Louis!” said Deedee. She stormed away.

It was Rondi’s turn. She made sure nobody else was listening. “Louis, will you help me?” she whispered.

“Sure, Rondi, what’s the problem?” asked Louis.

Rondi smiled, showing Louis her teeth.

“Very nice,” said Louis.

“And listen to this,” said Rondi. “She sells seashells by the seashore.”

“Very good,” said Louis.

“No it isn’t!” complained Rondi. “I used to whistle when I said words with s’s in them. Now nobody will think I’m cute.”

“I think you’re cute,” said Louis.

“You don’t count,” said Rondi.

“Well, thanks a lot,” said Louis.

“I didn’t mean it bad,” said Rondi. “You think everybody’s cute, even Miss Mush! That’s why I like you.”

“Thank you, Rondi. I like you, too.”

“Thank you,” said Rondi. “Will you please kick me in the teeth?”

“No,” said Louis.

“Why not?” asked Rondi. “You said you liked me. If you liked me, you’d kick me in the teeth.”

“You know I can’t,” said Louis. “If I kick you in the teeth, then all the other kids will want me to kick them in the teeth too.”

Rondi scowled. “Thanks for nothing, Louis!” she said. She crawled into the bushes where nobody would be able to see her mouth.

“Louis! Louis!” shouted Stephen and Jason as they ran toward him.

“Terrence stole our ball!” said Jason.

“I wish you children would learn to share,” said Louis.

“Make him give it back!” said Stephen.

Louis started to say something, then stopped. He twirled his multicolored mustache. “Hey, Rondi,” he called. “Will you help me?”

Rondi crawled out of the bushes. “You wouldn’t help me,” she said. “Why should I help you?”

“Terrence stole their ball,” said Louis. “Make him give it back.”

“Her?” asked Stephen and Jason.

“Me?” asked Rondi.

Louis winked at her.

Rondi’s eyes lit up. “Okay, Louis,” she said. “That’s a good idea. That’s a wonderful idea!”

She hurried across the playground. Stephen and Jason ran after her.

Terrence kicked a red ball up into the air, then ran under it and caught it.

“Hey, Terrence!” said Rondi. “That’s not your ball. You stole it!”

“Drop dead, Ketchup Head,” said Terrence.

Rondi walked up to him, stared him straight in the eye, and said, “In your hat, Muskrat!”

That surprised Terrence. He took a step back. Then he collected himself and said, “Dig a hole, Milly Mole!”

Rondi took another step toward him. “Kiss a goose, Dr. Seuss!” she replied.

Terrence looked around. A group of kids had formed a circle around them. “Go to jail, Garbage Pail!” he said.

Rondi held her ground. “Go to the zoo, Mr. Magoo!” she retorted.

Everyone was very impressed by how brave Rondi was.

“Now, give me the ball!” she demanded.

“You want it?” asked Terrence. “I’ll give it to you all right!” He raised his fist in the air.

“Good, let me have it!” said Rondi. She smiled, showing him her two new teeth.

Terrence shook his fist at her. “You’re asking for it,” he said.

“That’s right!” said Rondi. “I am.” Her teeth gleamed at him.

Terrence brought his fist way back behind him.

Rondi closed her eyes.

“Hey, look!” exclaimed Bebe. “Rondi’s got new teeth!”

“They’re cute,” said Jenny.

Rondi opened her eyes. “You think so?” she asked.

“No, you were cuter before,” said Paul.

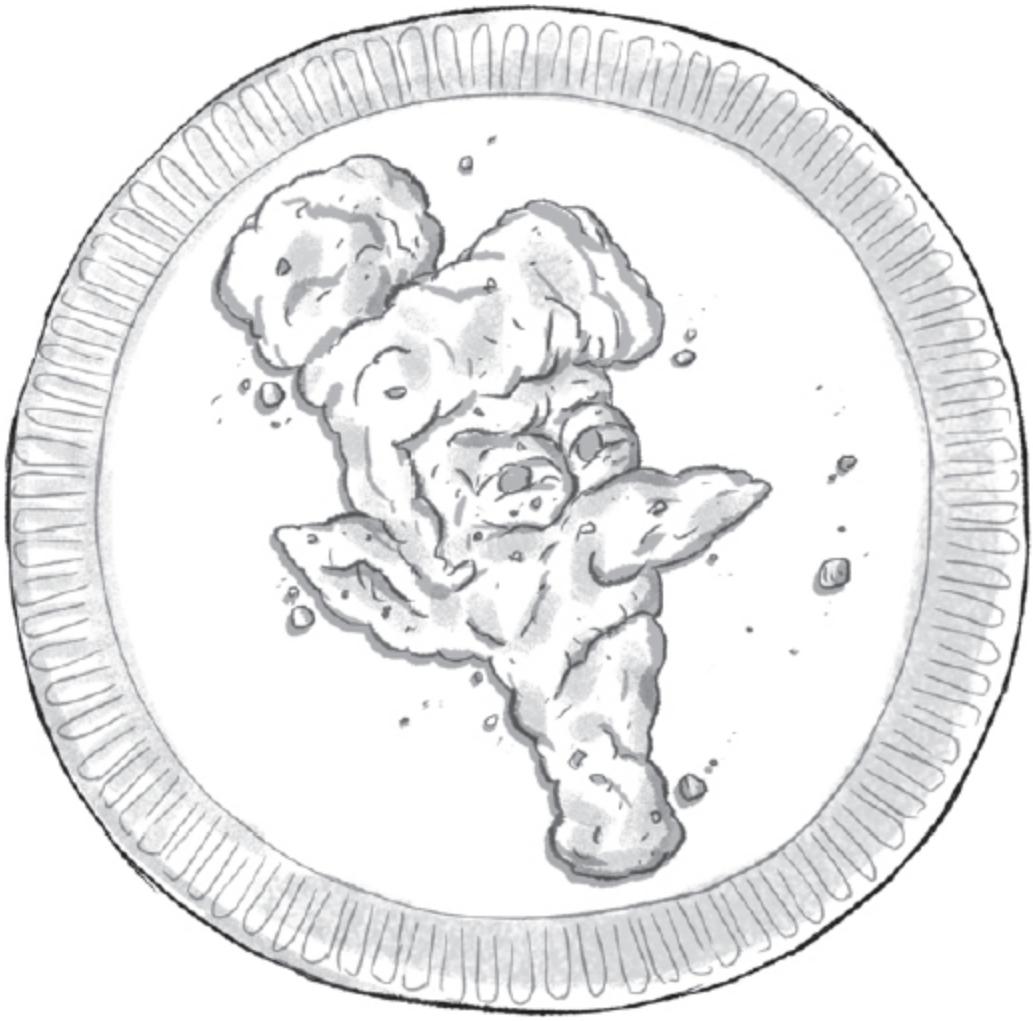
“I think she’s cuter now,” said Todd.

They took a vote. Twelve kids thought she looked cuter with her two new teeth and twelve thought she looked cuter before. Three thought she should keep just one tooth.

So Rondi decided to keep her teeth. They were good for biting carrots.

“Uh-oh!” She suddenly remembered.

She ducked just in time.



24

Another Story About Potatoes

Joe was next in line. He had forgotten his lunch.

"And what would you like, Joe?" asked Miss Mush.

"What do you have?" Joe asked.

"Potato salad," said Miss Mush.

"Anything else?" asked Joe.

"No, just potato salad," said Miss Mush.

Mrs. Jewls had made Miss Mush throw away the rest of the Mushroom Surprise, and she made Miss Mush promise never to make it again.

“Okay, I’ll have potato salad,” said Joe.

Miss Mush smiled. She scooped a large glop of potato salad out of the vat and plopped it on Joe’s paper plate.

Sharie was next in line. She had also forgotten her lunch.

“And what would you like, Sharie?” asked Miss Mush.

“What do you have?” asked Sharie.

“Potato salad.”

“What else is there?” asked Sharie.

“Nothing,” said Miss Mush.

“Okay,” said Sharie. “I’ll have that.”

“Potato salad?” asked Miss Mush.

“No, nothing,” said Sharie.

Joe was the only one who ordered the potato salad. Everyone else ordered nothing.

He slid his paper plate over to the cash register and paid for his lunch. Then he went to the ketchup and mustard table.

He looked at the grayish-white mound on his plate. He thought it needed more color. He squirted squiggly lines of yellow mustard all over it. Then he added several dollops of red ketchup.

“That’s very pretty, Joe,” said Bebe. “I didn’t know you were such a good artist.”

“Thanks,” said Joe. He looked for a place to sit.

“Hey, Joe! Over here!” called John.

Joe sat next to him. “Hi, pal,” he said.

“Hi, good buddy,” replied John.

They were best friends.

John had brought his lunch. He looked at Joe’s potato salad covered with yellow squiggles and red polka dots. “That’s very colorful,” he said.

“Thanks,” said Joe.

They both stared at it.

“I wonder what it tastes like,” said John.

“Who knows?” said Joe.

“There’s plenty more potato salad!” called Miss Mush. “Who wants seconds?”

Nobody wanted seconds of potato salad. Several kids went back for seconds of nothing, but soon Miss Mush ran out of nothing.

Finally Joe picked up his plastic fork and stuck it into the glop.

“What does it feel like?” asked John.

“Lumpy and gooey,” said Joe. He dragged his fork over the mound, swirling the mustard and ketchup together. “Kind of spongy, too.” The colors mixed with the potato salad. It turned a pale orange.

“It looks like a face,” said John.

Joe laughed. He shaped it so it would look even more like a face. He piled up some potato salad in the center, giving it a nose.

John had a plastic spoon. He dug out two holes for the eyes, then made eyebrows.

“That’s good,” said Joe. He gave it a big smiling mouth.

John made long, pointy ears.

They both laughed at their creation.

“I wonder what it tastes like,” said John.

“Who knows?” said Joe.

They stared at it.

“It kind of looks familiar,” said John. “Like somebody I know.”

“Who?” asked Joe.

“I’m not sure,” said John.

Joe noticed it, too. “It does look familiar,” he agreed.

“I’ve seen that face somewhere before,” said John.

“Me too,” said Joe.

The smile on the potato salad abruptly turned into a frown.

“Wow, did you see that?” asked Joe.

John’s eyes filled with terror. “I—I just figured out who it looks like,” he whispered.

“Who?” asked Joe.

“Mrs. Gorf.”

The potato salad laughed.

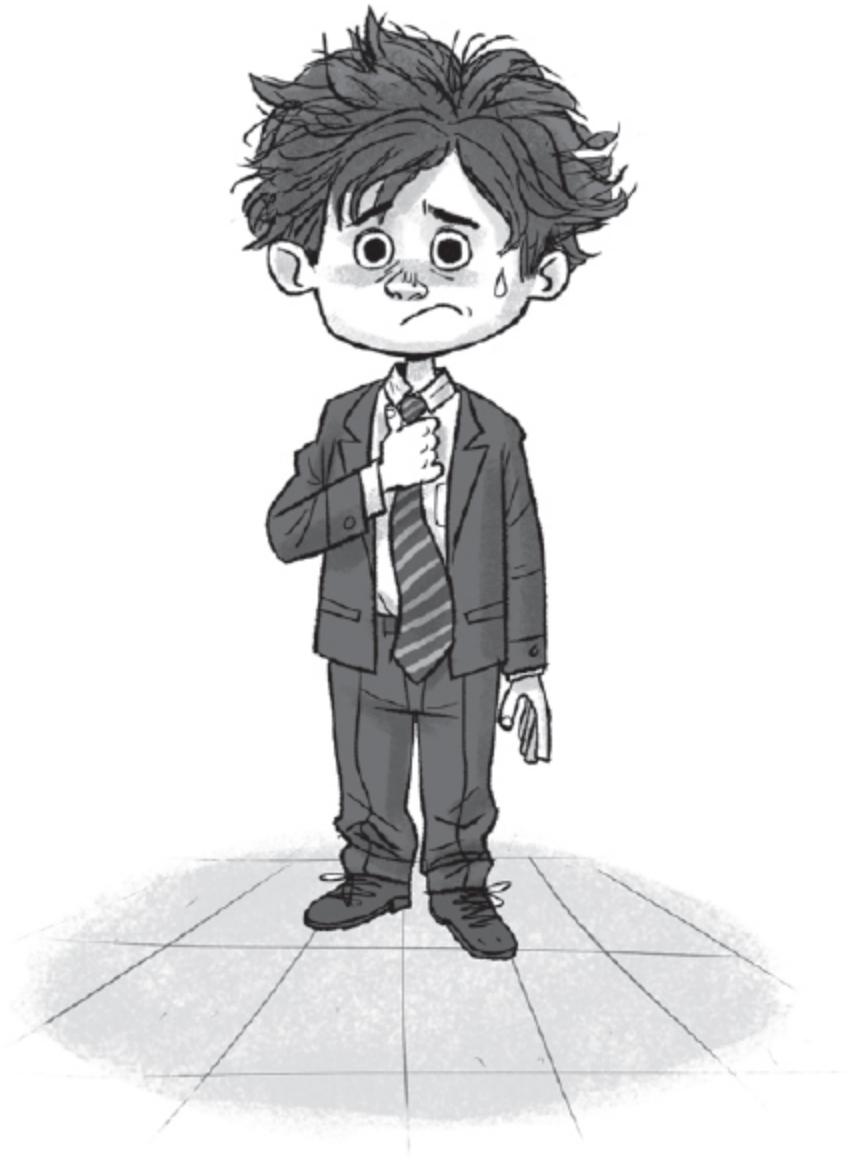
“Ha! Ha! Ha!” said Mrs. Gorf. “Now I’ll get you! You think you’re so cute, don’t you! Well, you won’t get away from me this time!”

She wiggled her ears, first her right one, then her left.

“Quick, Joe!” said John. “Eat her!”

The two boys dug their plastic utensils into the potato salad and shoveled it into their mouths as fast as they could.

Joe swallowed the final mouthful.
“Whew!” said John. “That was close.”
Joe rubbed his belly and sighed.
They both stared at the empty plate.
“You know, Joe,” said John, “that didn’t taste too bad.”
“It was pretty good,” Joe agreed.
They went back for seconds.



25

A Story That Isn’t About Socks

It was class picture day. The children were all dressed up in their best clothes.

Stephen came to school wearing a three-piece suit: gray trousers, a gray vest, and a gray jacket. Underneath his vest was a white shirt and a red and gold striped tie. On his feet were hard, black, shiny shoes.

He was very handsome.

The other kids laughed when they saw him.

"You've worn lots of silly costumes," said Bebe, "but this is the silliest one yet!"

Bebe was wearing yellow shorts, a red shirt with white polka dots, and a floppy green hat.

Mrs. Jewls rang her cowbell. "Settle down!" she said.

The children settled in their seats. Stephen remained standing.

"Look at Stephen," said Maurecia. "His jacket is the same color as his pants."

"They're supposed to be the same color," Stephen tried to explain. "It's a suit. And they're not called pants, they're called *trousers*."

"Oooooh," said Maurecia. "Can you go swimming in your suit?"

"No," said Stephen.

"I can go swimming in my suit," said Maurecia.

Maurecia had on a black and white striped bikini.

"I'm sure Stephen's suit is good for other things," said Mrs. Jewls.

"It is," said Stephen.

"Like what?" asked Todd.

"Standing around and looking important," said Stephen.

"What about sitting?" asked Todd.

"No, I'm not supposed to sit," said Stephen. "The suit might get wrinkled. I'm just supposed to stand around and look important."

"Oh," said Todd.

Todd was wearing white shorts, a Hawaiian shirt, and sunglasses.

Deedee crawled across the floor to Stephen so she could get a better look at his shoes. "They're so shiny!" she said. "I can see myself." She knocked on one of his shoes with her fist. "They're hard, too!"

"Deedee, get up," said Mrs. Jewls.

Deedee stood up. She had on a black T-shirt that came down to her knees. In the middle of the shirt was a red heart. Above the heart in sparkling silver and gold letters it said LOVE GODDESS.

"I bet they're good for kickball, huh, Stephen?" she asked. "Since they're so hard."

“No,” said Stephen. “I can’t run in them. And they hurt my feet.”

“Then why do you wear them?” asked Deedee.

“Because they’re uncomfortable,” Stephen explained. “You have to wear uncomfortable shoes if you want to look important.”

“Oh,” said Deedee.

“What’s that thing around your neck?” asked Paul.

“It’s a tie,” said Stephen.

“Does it keep your neck warm?” asked Paul.

“No,” said Stephen.

“Does it hold your shirt on?” asked Paul.

“No,” said Stephen.

“Well, what’s it for?” asked Paul.

“It chokes me,” said Stephen.

“Oh,” said Paul.

“The more it chokes me, the better I look,” Stephen explained. “See?” He tightened his tie.

“Oh, yeah,” said Paul. “You look real handsome.”

Paul was wearing cowboy-and-Indian pajamas.

Stephen pulled his tie tighter. “Now how do I look?” he asked.

“Wow, you look great!” said D.J. “Pull it tighter!”

Stephen pulled his tie even tighter. “How’s this?” he gasped.

“You look great and very important,” said D.J.

D.J. was wearing a toga made out of his bed sheet.

“Pull it tighter!” said Bebe.

Stephen pulled on his tie. He could no longer breathe.

“Tighter!” everyone yelled.

Stephen pulled it even tighter. His eyes bulged and his nose turned blue. He had never been more handsome.

“Tighter!” they all shouted.

Stephen pulled his tie so hard that he ripped it in half.

“Ohhhhhhhhh,” the whole class groaned.

“Darn!” said Stephen. “Now I’m not great and important anymore.”

“Yes you are, Stephen,” said Mrs. Jewls. “You’re just as great and important as you ever were.”

“I am?” Stephen asked.

“Certainly,” said Mrs. Jewls. “The tie didn’t make you important. It doesn’t matter what you wear on the outside. It’s what’s underneath that

counts.”

“Underneath?” asked Stephen.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Jewls. “If you want to be great and important, you have to wear expensive underpants.”

“Oh,” said Stephen.

Mrs. Jewls had on a flowered tank top and a grass skirt.

26

The Mean Mrs. Jewls

Everybody in Mrs. Jewls’s class thought she was a very nice teacher.

They were wrong. There is no such thing as a nice teacher.

If you think you have a nice teacher, then you are wrong too.

Inside every nice teacher there is a mean and rotten teacher bursting to get out. The nicer the teacher is on the outside, the meaner the teacher inside is.

As Mrs. Jewls was changing the bulletin board before class, a mean and rotten voice whispered inside her brain. “Give the children lots of busy work today,” it said. “And then make them do it over again if their handwriting isn’t perfect.”

Mrs. Jewls tried very hard to ignore the voice. She didn’t like giving busy work. Instead she tried to teach the children three new things every day. She believed that if they learned three new things every day, they would eventually learn everything there is to know.

There are some classes where the teachers give so much busy work that the children never learn anything.

“What do you care if the children learn anything?” asked the mean and rotten voice. “It’s not your job to teach them. It’s your job to punish them. Keep them in at recess. Hit them with your yardstick!”

The bell rang and all the kids scurried to their desks.

“We are going to learn three new things today,” Mrs. Jewls announced. “How to make pickles, seven plus four, and the capital of England.”

All the children paid close attention.

“The capital of England is London,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Seven plus four equals eleven. And pickles are made by sticking cucumbers in brine.”

On her desk she had a box of cucumbers and a vat of brine for a demonstration.

“Okay, Joe,” said Mrs. Jewls. “How much is seven plus four?”

Joe shrugged.

“But I just told you, Joe,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Weren’t you listening?”

“I don’t know,” said Joe.

“Okay, who can tell me how pickles are made? Yes, Jason.”

“Eleven!” Jason declared.

Mrs. Jewls frowned. “That’s a correct answer,” she said, “but unfortunately I didn’t ask the right question. Can anyone tell me how pickles are made? Yes, Bebe.”

“In London,” said Bebe.

“I suppose they make some pickles in London,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Okay, let’s start again. Calvin, what’s the capital of England?”

“Could you write England on the board?” asked Calvin. “I can do a lot better when I can see the question.”

Mrs. Jewls wrote *England* on the board.

“Oh, okay,” said Calvin, now that he saw the question. “The capital of England is E.”

“Yes, that’s one capital of England,” Mrs. Jewls had to admit. “Okay, I will say it one more time. The capital of England is London.”

“Isn’t that where they make all the pickles?” asked Jenny.

“No, they don’t make all the pickles in London,” explained Allison. “Just eleven.”

“Well, where do they make the rest of the pickles?” asked Stephen.

“Shut up!” shouted Mrs. Jewls. “Well, that does it. You’re all staying inside for recess!”

Everyone stared at her. Mrs. Jewls had never told anyone to shut up. It was against the class rules for anyone to use that expression. If you did, you had to write your name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

Mrs. Jewls put her hand over her mouth, then took it away. “Oh dear, I’m very sorry,” she said. “I don’t know what came over me.”

She wrote her own name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

“Perhaps you’ll learn the lesson better if you write it down,” she suggested. “Everyone please take out a piece of paper and a pickle.”

Everybody laughed.

“Pencil!” snapped Mrs. Jewls. “I meant to say pencil. It just came out pickle.”

“I didn’t know pickles came from pencils,” said Jenny. “I thought they came from cucumbers.”

“I thought they came from London,” said Todd.

Mrs. Jewls made an ugly face. “Todd, didn’t I just tell you to shut up?” she asked. She picked up her yardstick and held it over Todd’s head. “Well, answer me!” she demanded. “Didn’t I tell you to shut up?”

“Yes,” said Todd.

“How dare you talk back to me!” snapped Mrs. Jewls. “Didn’t I just tell you to shut up?”

Todd kept his mouth shut.

"Well, answer me!" she demanded.

Todd didn't know what to do. He nodded his head.

"Keep still!" ordered Mrs. Jewls. "Now I don't want you to say another word, is that clear?"

Todd stared at her.

"Is that clear?" she asked again.

"Yes," Todd said meekly.

Mrs. Jewls slammed down the yardstick. Todd quickly moved out of the way. The yardstick banged against his desk and broke in half.

Mrs. Jewls stared at the eighteen inches she held in her hand. "Oh my goodness," she said. "I'm sorry, Todd. I don't know what's the matter with me today. I must have gotten up on the wrong side of the bed this morning."

She put a check next to her name under the word DISCIPLINE.

"Okay, let me try to make this very simple," she said. "If I have seven cucumbers. And then I get four more cucumbers. And then I drop all the cucumbers in brine and take them to the capital of England. What do I have? How many? And where am I?"

"Huh?" said D. J.

"What?" asked John.

"Could you write the question on the board, please?" asked Rondi.

"Shut up!" Mrs. Jewls yelled a third time. In a mocking voice she said, "'Could you write the question on the board, please?' You kids think you are so cute! Well, we'll see just how cute you really are." She picked up the vat of brine from her desk. "How would you like it if I poured this on your heads? You won't be so cute when you're all shriveled up and covered with warts, like pickles!"

She walked up and down the aisles carrying the pickle juice and glaring at the children.

No one dared make a sound.

She stopped next to Leslie. "How about you, Leslie?" she asked. "How would you like pickled pigtails?"

Leslie trembled. Her pigtails wiggled.

"Well, I'm going to ask you three questions, Leslie," said Mrs. Jewls. "And if you don't answer them all correctly, I'm going to dump this on your head."

Leslie gulped.

“Question one,” said Mrs. Jewls. “How much is seven plus four?”

Leslie quickly tried to count on her fingers but she didn’t have enough. “Eleven?” she guessed.

A look of disappointment came over Mrs. Jewls’s face. “Okay, question two: What is the capital of England?”

“L-London,” Leslie said nervously. .

“Rats!” said Mrs. Jewls. “Okay, question three.” She looked down at the vat of brine she was holding and shook her head. She thought a moment, then smiled. “What is the name of my cousin who lives in Vermont?”

Leslie had no idea, so she just had to take a wild guess. She closed her eyes and said, “Fred Jewls?”

“Wrong!” exclaimed Mrs. Jewls. She raised the vat of brine high above Leslie’s head and started to tip it over.

Paul jumped out of his seat. Those pigtails had once saved his life. Now it was his turn to return the favor!

He pushed the vat of brine back the other way. He was just trying to push it up straight, but he pushed too hard. It poured all over Mrs. Jewls, drenching her.

Paul froze in terror.

Mrs. Jewls blinked her eyes. Pickle juice dripped down her face. “Thanks, Paul,” she said. “I needed that.”

The brine had cured her.

She circled her name on the blackboard and sent herself home early on the kindergarten bus.

27

Lost and Found

Joy and Maurecia were best friends. They sat down on the grass to eat their lunches, but then Maurecia remembered she needed chocolate milk. She went to get some from Miss Mush.

When she returned, she couldn't find her lunch.

"What happened to my lunch?" she asked.

Joy looked up at her, then shrugged her shoulders.

"I set my lunch down right here!" said Maurecia. "You saw me, didn't you?"

Joy shook her head.

"I put it here, then I went to Miss Mush's room to get some chocolate milk. I had a peanut butter and banana sandwich! And there's no way I can eat a peanut butter and banana sandwich without chocolate milk."

Joy shrugged her shoulders.

Maurecia didn't know what to do.

"Ca' I haf a thip uff your milk?" asked Joy.

It was hard for Joy to talk, because her mouth was full of peanut butter and bananas.

Maurecia handed Joy the carton of chocolate milk.

Joy took a big drink, then swallowed.

Maurecia looked all around for her lunch. She crawled in the dirt as she searched through the bushes.

“Any luck?” asked Joy as she finished Maurecia’s chocolate milk.

“I found it!” Maurecia exclaimed.

Joy coughed on the chocolate milk. “You did?” she asked, then coughed again.

Maurecia crawled out of the bushes holding a paper sack. She sat back down next to Joy and opened it.

“Is it your lunch?” asked Joy.

“No,” said Maurecia.

“Too bad,” said Joy.

“It’s money!” exclaimed Maurecia.

Joy’s eyes nearly popped out of her head as she looked at the paper bag. It was stuffed with dollar bills. And they weren’t just one-dollar bills. There were a few five-dollar bills, some ten-dollar bills, but mostly twenty-dollar bills.

“We found a million dollars!” Joy whispered.

“*We?*” asked Maurecia.

They counted the money. It wasn’t a million dollars. It was twenty thousand six hundred and fifty-five dollars.

“Let’s split it,” said Joy. “You take half and I’ll take half.”

“Maybe I should show it to Louis,” said Maurecia.

“Louis!” exclaimed Joy. “Are you crazy? Let’s spend it. We can buy a skateboard, or a bicycle, or a horse, or a fancy car, or an airplane!”

“I like taking the bus,” said Maurecia.

“You could buy ice cream!” said Joy. “All the ice cream you ever want for the rest of your life.” She knew Maurecia loved ice cream more than anything else in the world.

Maurecia smiled as she thought about it. “No, I better show it to Louis. He’ll know what to do.”

“You’ll just get in trouble,” warned Joy. “Louis will think you robbed a bank. You’ll go to jail for the rest of your life.”

“Louis knows I’m not a bank robber,” said Maurecia.

“But what if the real bank robbers find out you have their money?” asked Joy. “They’ll come after you and murder you.”

“Oh, I didn’t think of that,” said Maurecia.

“You better give it to me,” said Joy.

“Louis will protect me,” said Maurecia. She walked across the playground.

Louis was talking to Terrence. He said, “If you ever tie Leslie’s pigtails to the tetherball pole again, I’ll—”

“Louis, look!” said Maurecia. She held the paper sack up to his face.

“No thank you, Maurecia, I’m not hungry,” said Louis.

“It’s not my lunch,” said Maurecia. “Look inside!”

Louis took the bag from her and looked inside. “Very nice,” he said, then gave it back to her. “Now I want you to go untie Leslie and tell her—”

He suddenly stopped talking and blinked his eyes. He looked at Terrence, then at Maurecia, then at Terrence, then at Maurecia, and then at the paper sack. “Let me see that again,” he said.

Maurecia gave him the bag.

“Hey, what about me?” asked Terrence.

“Get lost, Jack Frost,” said Louis.

Terrence ran away.

“Did you rob a bank?” asked Louis.

“No, I found it in the bushes,” said Maurecia.

“I believe you,” said Louis. “We’ll have to put it in the lost and found.”

“I know,” said Maurecia. “Whoever lost it is probably very sad.”

“But if no one claims it in two weeks, you can have it,” said Louis. He took the bag of money and headed to the office.

Joy was waiting for Louis at the door. “Hey, Louis,” she said. “I lost a bag full of money. Have you seen it?”

“Help!” Leslie screamed from the tetherball court.

A week later, Maurecia was eating lunch alone. She was eating a piece of sweet potato pie. Joy was crawling around in the dirt looking for more bags of money.

“Maurecia,” said Louis, “I’d like you to meet someone. This is Mr. Finch.”

Mr. Finch was an old man with white hair and a long white beard. He shook Maurecia’s hand with both of his hands.

“It’s your money, isn’t it?” asked Maurecia.

Mr. Finch nodded. “It was my life’s savings,” he said. “For fifty years I made pencils. I got a penny for every pencil I made. I hate pencils! But finally I saved enough money to quit my job and do what I always wanted to do.”

“What’s that?” asked Maurecia.

“I’m going to open my own ice cream parlor,” he said, then started to cry. “When I lost that money, I thought I’d have to start making pencils again.”

Maurecia cried too.

“Here, I want you to have this,” blubbered Mr. Finch. He gave her an envelope containing five hundred dollars.

It was the second largest amount of money Maurecia had ever had.

“And I will give you free ice cream for the rest of your life at my ice cream parlor,” he promised.

“Thank you!” said Maurecia.

“No, thank *you*,” said Mr. Finch. “I’m so glad someone as kind and as honest as you found it. There are so many dishonest people in the world. It’s good to know there are still good people too.”

They hugged each other.

Joy crawled out of the bushes. “Hey. Who’s that?” she asked.

“This is Mr. Finch,” said Maurecia. “It’s his money. Look, he gave me a reward of five hundred dollars. And I’ll get free ice cream for the rest of my life!”

“Well, what about me?” Joy demanded. “Don’t I get anything?”

“Oh, dear me,” said Mr. Finch. “I didn’t realize there was someone else involved.”

“Maurecia would never have found the money if it wasn’t for me,” said Joy.

“Why, what’d you do?” asked Louis.

“I stole her lunch!” Joy said proudly.

Mr. Finch gave her a pencil.

28

Valooosh

Mrs. Jewls rang her cowbell. “I have some wonderful news,” she said.

The children stopped what they were doing and looked up. They waited for Mrs. Jewls to tell them the wonderful news.

“You are a very lucky class indeed,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Mrs. Waloosh, the world famous dancer, will be coming here to Wayside School! She will teach you how to dance!”

Everyone was still waiting for the wonderful news.

“Isn’t that exciting?” asked Mrs. Jewls. “You will see her every Wednesday instead of going to P.E.”

“Will girls have to dance with *boys*?” asked Jenny.

“I suppose,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Gross!” exclaimed Leslie.

“Yuck!” said Dana.

“Will boys have to dance with *girls*?” asked Ron.

“Obviously,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“No way!” said Eric Fry.

“I’d rather dance with a dead rat!” said Terrence.

Everybody started talking at once—about cooties, and warts, and other horrible diseases you get from touching girls or boys.

Mrs. Jewls rang her cowbell again and told them to settle down.

“Mrs. Jewls, I don’t need to take dancing lessons,” said Eric Bacon. “I already know how to dance!”

“Yes, Eric, I’ve seen you ‘dance,’” Mrs. Jewls said sarcastically.

Eric Bacon was a great breakdancer. But breakdancing was no longer allowed at Wayside School. That was because every time Eric danced, he broke something.

“Mrs. Waloosh will teach you the grace and beauty of classical ballroom dancing,” said Mrs. Jewls.

Everybody groaned.

On Wednesday they all headed down to their first dancing lesson. Except Myron. Myron went to P.E.

“How come Myron never has to do anything?” asked Jason.

“I don’t know!” said Calvin. “I’ve been wondering about that too.”

“Myron’s father must be friends with the president,” said Bebe.

“I think Myron gave Mr. Kidswatter a thousand dollars,” said Todd.

“No, I bet he’s blackmailing Mrs. Jewls,” said Jenny.

“How could he do that?” asked Benjamin.

“Maybe Mrs. Jewls got drunk!” said Jenny. “And then she danced on top of her desk with a lampshade on her head. And Myron took her picture. And so now Mrs. Jewls has to let Myron do anything he wants, or else he’ll show the picture to Mr. Kidswatter!”

“That makes sense,” said Mac.

“Except if she had a lampshade on her head, how would Mr. Kidswatter know it was Mrs. Jewls?” asked Todd.

No one knew the answer to that.

They entered the room on the second floor.

“Velcome!” said Mrs. Waloosh, a strange-looking woman with bright red hair. It looked like her head was on fire. “My name eez Meez Valooosh. It’s so vonderful to be here at Vayside School.”

She wore pink tights and a sparkling pink top. “I hope ve vill be friends, yes?” she asked.

Nobody said a word.

All around were red and green balls. There was also one yellow ball. This was the room where Louis kept the balls for lunch and recess. It was also the room that was always used for school dances. It was the ballroom.

“So!” exclaimed Mrs. Waloosh. “Who vill be first?”

Everyone tried to hide behind someone else.

Mrs. Waloosh put her hands on Ron’s face. “Vhat eez your name?” she asked.

“Ron,” he squeaked.

“RONALDO!” bellowed Mrs. Waloosh. “King of the Gypsies!”

“I don’t know how to dance,” said Ron.

“D*ah*nce?” asked Mrs. Waloosh. She looked very surprised. “Ve are not going to da*h*nce,” she said.

“We’re not?” asked Ron.

“No, Ronaldo,” whispered Mrs. Waloosh. “Ve are going to *tango*!”

She put her left arm around Ron’s waist. Then she grabbed his left hand with her right and stuck it way out in front of them. Suddenly the music started.

Mrs. Waloosh dragged poor Ron across the room as she stomped her feet in time to the music.

Domp. Domp-domp. Domp-domp. Da-da-domp. Domp! Domp! Domp! Domp! Domp-domp-domp-domp-domp, “HEY!”

When she yelled “HEY!” she threw Ron up in the air and clapped her hands. Ron turned a somersault in midair; then Mrs. Waloosh caught him. They tangoed back to where they started. Ron’s eyes were spinning in opposite directions.

“Hey, that looked like fun,” said Maurecia. “Do me.”

“Very vell,” said Mrs. Waloosh. She grabbed Maurecia and tangoed with her across the room. Domp. Domp-domp. Domp-domp. Da-da-domp. Domp! Domp! Domp! Domp! Domp-domp-domp-domp-domp, “HEY!” She threw Maurecia up in the air and clapped her hands.

Maurecia turned a double somersault before Mrs. Waloosh caught her. They tangoed back to the front.

“My turn,” said Terrence.

As Mrs. Waloosh tangoed with Terrence, the other kids stamped their feet along with Mrs. Waloosh. They all yelled “HEY!” at the same time and clapped their hands.

One by one, Mrs. Waloosh tangoed with every kid in the class. The other kids danced with each other. Boys danced with girls, and girls danced with boys. They didn’t care. Paul danced with Leslie. Dana danced with John. Terrence danced with Rondi. Allison danced with Jason. D.J. danced with Kathy. Todd danced with Joy.

“HEY!” they all shouted together.

Of course, they weren’t strong enough to throw each other up in the air. Instead, they tried to trip each other and throw each other to the ground. “HEY!”

Even Kathy was having fun. “HEY!” she shouted as she kicked D.J. in the rear end.

They also threw the balls at each other. “HEY!”

Mrs. Waloosh began to get tired. Sometimes she didn’t catch the children after she tossed them in the air.

Deedee crashed to the floor. “Wow,” she said, “this is more fun than murder-the-man-with-the-ball! HEY!”

At last the music stopped. Domp! Domp! Domp! Domp! Domp-domp-domp-domp-domp. And everyone shouted “HEY!” one last time.

Mrs. Waloosh clapped her hands. “Vonderful!” she exclaimed. “Fahntasteek!”

They all staggered out of the ballroom, cut up, bruised, and bleeding.

“Next veek, ve valtz!” Mrs. Waloosh called after them.

“So how did everyone like dancing?” asked Mrs. Jewls when they returned.

“Da*h*nce?” asked Ronaldo, King of the Gypsies. “Ve didn’t da*h*nce.”

“You didn’t?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“No,” said Ronaldo. “Ve *tangoed*!”

Everyone cheered.

“It vas vonderful!” exclaimed Kathy.

“Fahntasteek!” said Terrence.

Myron was sorry he had missed it.

“I can’t vait till next Vednesday,” said Todd.

29

The Lost Ear

Mrs. Jewls was teaching the class about mammals. “All mammals have hair,” she said.

Bebe raised her hand. “Is my father a mammal?” she asked.

“Yes, all people are mammals.” said Mrs. Jewls.

“But my father doesn’t have any hair,” said Bebe. “He’s bald!”

Everybody laughed.

Benjamin stared down at his desk top. He was very determined. Mrs. Jewls would be handing out report cards at the end of the week. He had to tell her his real name before then.

He raised his hand.

But Mac also had his hand raised.

“Yes, Mac,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“I heard about a man who was getting his hair cut,” said Mac. “And the barber cut off one of the man’s ears! See, the man had very long hair. I think he was a hippie. So the barber couldn’t see his ear until it fell on the floor.”

“Thank you, Mac,” said Mrs. Jewls. “That was a very interesting story.”

“I’m not finished,” said Mac. “When the barber saw the ear on the floor, he said, ‘Is that your ear on the floor?’ And then the hippie said ‘What? I can’t hear you.’ So the barber showed him his ear; then he called an ambulance to take the hippie to the hospital.”

“Were they able to put his ear back on?” asked Todd.

“Well, see,” said Mac, “the doctors were all set to sew it to his head. They were in the operating room and everything. But suddenly they couldn’t find the ear. Man, they looked everywhere for it!”

“Did they look under the operating table?” asked Joy.

“Yep,” said Mac. “It wasn’t there.”

“How about in the bathroom?” asked Eric Bacon. “Maybe they lost it when they washed their hands.”

“They looked, but it wasn’t there,” said Mac.

“Did they leave it at the barbershop?” asked Jenny.

“Nope.”

“Did they ever find it?” asked Allison.

“Yes,” said Mac, “but you’ll never guess where!”

“In the refrigerator,” grumbled Mrs. Jewls.

“No, how would it get there?” asked Mac.

“Well, we really need to get back to mammals,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Yes, Mark.”

Benjamin lowered his hand. “My name’s not Mark,” he said. “My name really is Benjamin. Benjamin Nushmutt! And I came from Hempleton, not Magadonia.”

“Fine,” said Mrs. Jewls. “But we were talking about mammals. Now the whale is the largest mammal. Even though it lives in the ocean, it is still a mammal, not a fish.”

“Do whales have hair?” asked John.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Jewls.

Dana laughed. “A whale with pigtails!” she exclaimed.

“Boy, I’d love to pull one of those!” said Paul.

Benjamin couldn’t believe it. “Didn’t you hear what I just said?” he asked.

“Yes, Benjamin,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Well, don’t you think I’m strange?” asked Benjamin. “All this time you’ve been calling me by the wrong name, and I never told you? Don’t you think I’m crazy?”

“No,” said Mrs. Jewls.

Benjamin was getting upset. “Well, don’t you think it’s a stupid name? Benjamin Nushmutt!” He looked around at his classmates. “Doesn’t anybody think I’m weird?”

“No, you’re not weird!” said Sharie. “I’ll tell you what’s weird. What’s weird is bringing a hobo to school for show-and-tell. I’m the one who’s weird.”

“That’s not weird!” said Bebe. “What’s weird is telling everyone you have a brother when you don’t. I’m the weirdo!”

“You call that weird?” exclaimed Stephen. “*I’m* weird. Who else would choke himself just to look nice?”

“That’s not weird,” said Jenny. “That’s normal. Try reading a story backward. That’s weird. I’m the weird one in this class.”

“That’s a laugh!” said Rondi. “If you’re so weird, then how come you never asked Louis to kick you in the teeth? I’m the one who’s crazy!”

“No, that’s not crazy,” said Todd. “I’ll tell you what’s crazy. What’s crazy is that we all go to school on the thirtieth floor, and the bathrooms are way down on the first!”

Everyone agreed with that, even Mrs. Jewls.

Benjamin shook his head. What a bunch of weirdos! he thought. Then he smiled. He felt proud to be in a class where nobody was strange because

nobody was normal.

"Oh, this must be your lunch," said Mrs. Jewls. She gave Benjamin the white paper sack that had been sitting on her desk since Benjamin's first day of school.

At lunch Allison headed down the stairs. "Mark!" she exclaimed.

"Hi, Allison," said Mark Miller. "Long time no see." He carried a white paper sack just like Benjamin's.

Allison was afraid she was back on the nineteenth story.

"Don't worry," said Mark. "Suddenly everyone realized my name was Mark Miller and not Benjamin Nushmutt. And then Miss Zarves gave me this bag and told me to take it to the hospital."

"Is it your lunch?" asked Allison.

"Look inside," said Mark. He handed her the bag.

Allison looked inside.

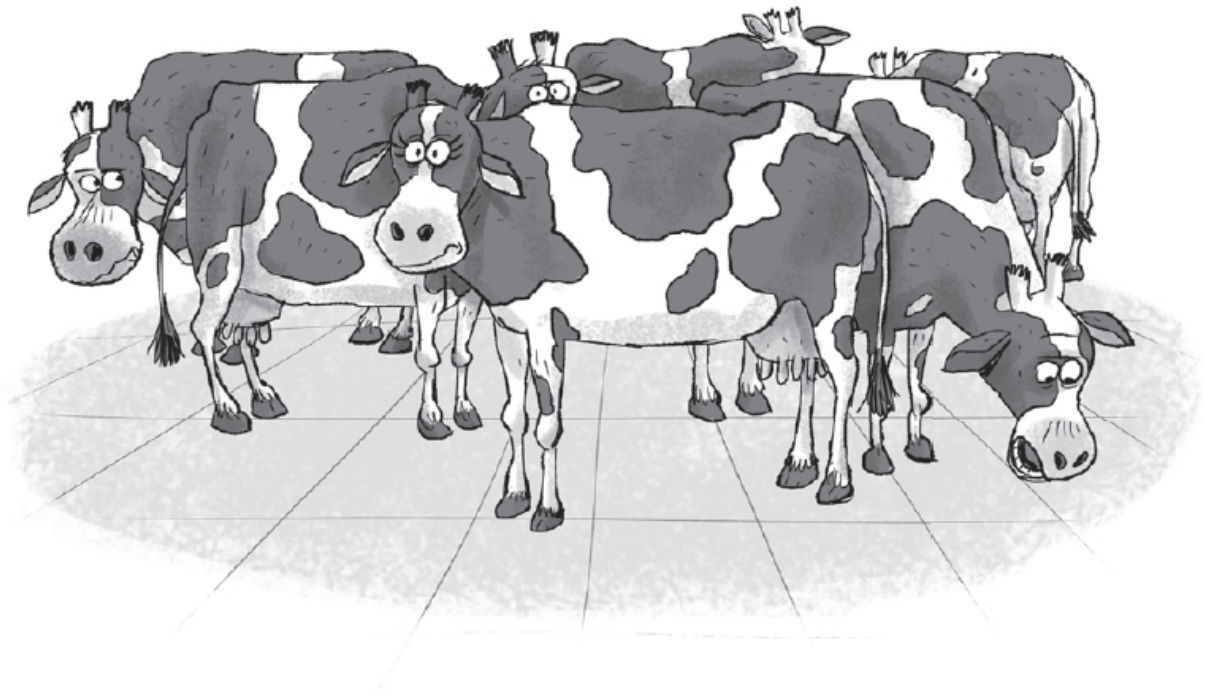
There was an ear.

Allison's eyes lit up. "Oh, now I get it!" she exclaimed. "I understand everything! There is no Miss Zarves! See, Mac was talking about the ear, then Mark Miller, I mean Benjamin Nushmutt, said his name wasn't Mark Miller, so that means you—"

"What?" asked Mark.

Allison suddenly looked very confused. "Never mind," she mumbled.

For just a second Allison had understood everything, but then she lost it.



30

Wayside School Is Falling Down

A strong wind whooshed around the playground in the early morning before school, blowing dirt and leaves in the faces of the children.

When the bell rang, they could hardly make it from the playground to the school. The wind was blowing directly at them, pushing their hair straight back.

With every gust of wind the school building teetered one way, then tottered back the other.

As they headed up the stairs, they could feel the building sway back and forth. The higher they got, the more it swayed.

"Hooray!" yelled Kathy. "Wayside School is falling down!"

"What are you so happy about?" asked Joe. "We'll all die."

"Yes, but we won't have to do our homework," said Kathy.

They entered the room on the thirtieth story.

Mrs. Jewls rang her cowbell. "Find your seats," she said.

That wasn’t easy. All the desks were crammed together on one side of the room. The building swayed, and the desks slid to the other side of the room.

Finally the children all found their seats and planted their feet firmly on the floor.

“We are going to have a fire drill today,” Mrs. Jewls told them. “So let’s be prepared. Who is our door monitor this week?”

“I am,” said Maurecia.

“Good,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Who is our help monitor?”

“I am,” said Jason.

“Very good,” said Mrs. Jewls. “You have a big mouth”.

Stephen raised his hand. “What if there really is a fire?” he asked.

“There’s not going to be a real fire,” said Mrs. Jewls. “It’s just a drill.”

“I know, but what if there really is a fire?” asked Stephen. “And then the firemen won’t come because they’ll think it’s a drill! The school will burn down!”

“Don’t worry,” said Kathy. “The school is not going to burn down. It’s going to fall down!”

BLEEP! BLEEP! BLEEP! . . . BLEEP! BLEEP! BLEEP! . . . BLEEP! BLEEP! BLEEP!

It was the fire drill.

Maurecia, the door monitor, held open the door.

Jason, the help monitor, ran to the window. “Help!” he screamed. “Save us! We’re up here. Help! Help!”

Mrs. Jewls led the children out of the room. If there was a real fire, the children might not be able to see her because of the smoke, so she constantly rang her cowbell. There wouldn’t be time to go all the way down the stairs, either. Mrs. Jewls led them up the ladder and through the trapdoor to the roof. If there was a real fire, helicopters would rescue them.

The wind was even worse on the roof than it was on the playground. Mrs. Jewls stood in the center and held the cowbell high above her head. She looked just like the Statue of Liberty.

“Everyone stay away from the edge!” she warned.

Kathy sang: “Wayside School is falling down, falling down . . .”

“It’s not falling down,” said Stephen. “It’s burning down! And no one will rescue us because they think it’s a drill.”

Jenny noticed a dark, funnel-shaped cloud off in the distance. “Tornado!” she screamed. “We’re all going to get sucked off the roof!”

A flash of lightning lit the sky, followed by a loud crack of thunder.

“We’re going to be struck by lightning!” shouted Todd.

“No we won’t,” said Stephen. “We’ll burn in the fire.”

“No, we’ll be sucked up in the tornado,” said Jenny.

“No, the school is going to fall down,” said Kathy.

Mrs. Jewls continued to ring her cowbell. *Klabonk! Klabonk! Klabonk!* The strong wind carried the sound for miles.

Suddenly, screams came from down below. Then the whole building began to shake violently.

“Earthquake!” yelled Benjamin.

“Fire,” corrected Stephen.

“The school must have been struck by lightning,” said Todd.

“Tornado,” said Jenny.

“All fall down,” said Kathy.

The building continued to rumble and shake. There were more screams.

“Listen!” said Myron. “They’re trying to warn us about something.”

Down below, over five hundred kids and teachers were shouting together: “STAR BRINGING PURPLE!”

“What are they saying?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“I don’t know,” said Myron.

Mrs. Jewls rattled her cowbell.

“STAR BRINGING PURPLE!” they shouted again.

“It sounds like ‘Star bringing purple,’” said Myron.

“What does that mean?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

Myron shrugged.

Mrs. Jewls rang her bell even louder.

“STAR BRINGING YORBEL!”

“Wait,” said Myron. “They’re not saying, ‘Star bringing purple.’ They’re saying, ‘Star bringing yorbel.’”

“What’s a yorbel?” asked Mrs. Jewls. She rang her bell even louder.

The school shook and rumbled.

“STOP BRINGING YORBEL!”

“Stop something,” said Myron.

Mrs. Jewls rang her cowbell.

“STOP RINGING YOUR BELL!”

“Stop ringing your bell,” said Myron.

“Oh,” said Mrs. Jewls. She stopped ringing her bell.

Down below, all the students and teachers clapped their hands.

But it was too late.

Rondi opened the trapdoor. “Cows!” she exclaimed.

The school was filled with cows.

From all over the countryside, cows had heard Mrs. Jewls’s cowbell and heeded the call. There were thousands of them. They filled the stairs and all the classrooms.

There was no way for the children to get down. Helicopters finally came and took them one at a time off the roof.

Wayside School didn’t blow down. It didn’t burn down. It wasn’t struck by lightning, sucked up in a tornado, or destroyed by an earthquake.

It was cowed.

No one knew how to get rid of the cows. Cows are strange animals. They don’t mind walking up stairs, but nothing can make them walk down stairs.

Someone suggested starving the cows, but the farmers wouldn’t allow that. Thousands of bales of hay were sent in. Several cows had calves.

The newspapers thought it was funny and made jokes about smart cows learning to read and write.

And so Wayside School was closed. The kids and teachers were temporarily sent to different schools.

Only one person stayed behind. He was there all day and all night trying to get the cows to go home.

“C’mon,” pleaded Louis, the yard teacher, as he pushed and pulled on the cows. “Go home. Please? Pretty please?”

Everybody mooed.

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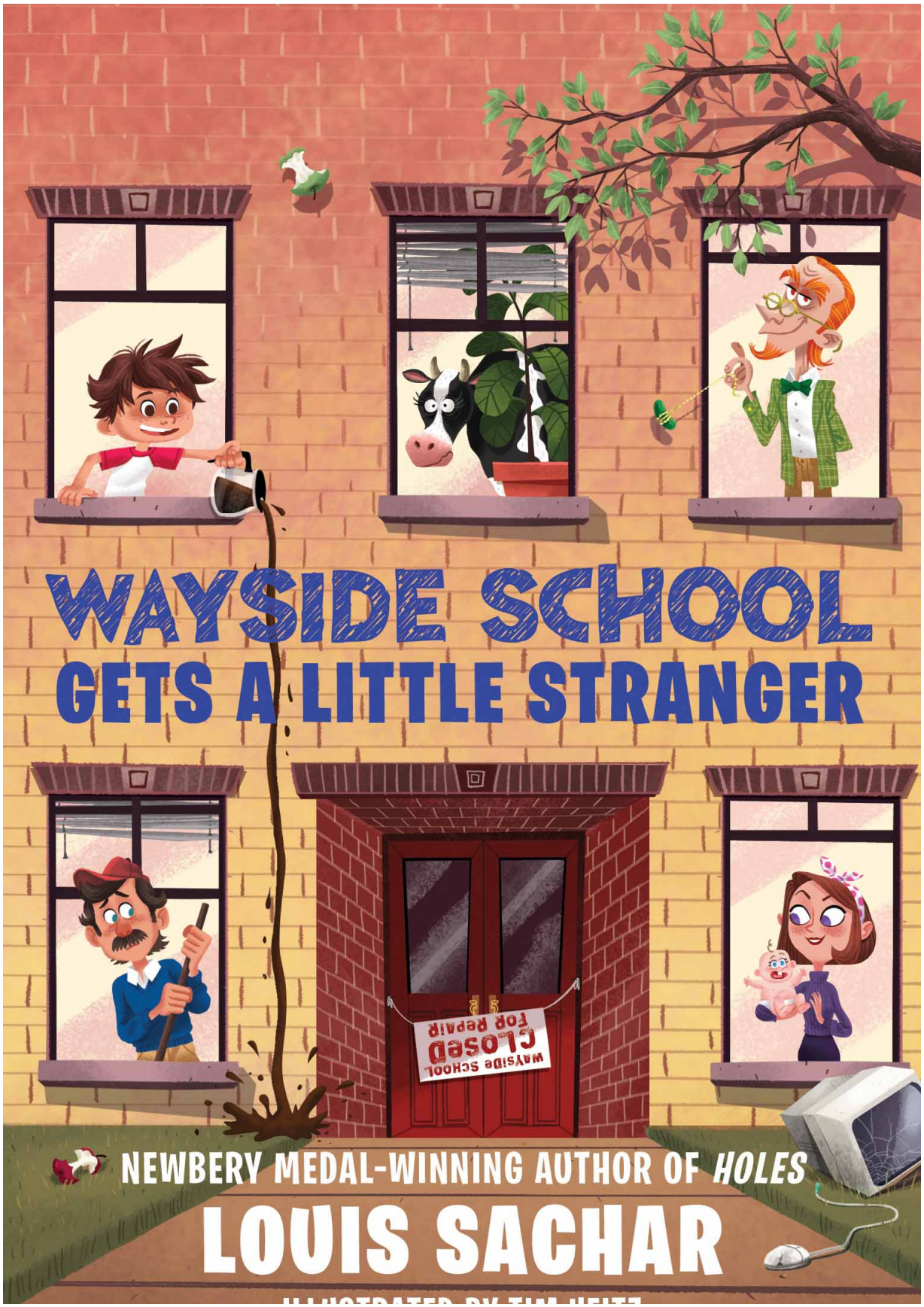
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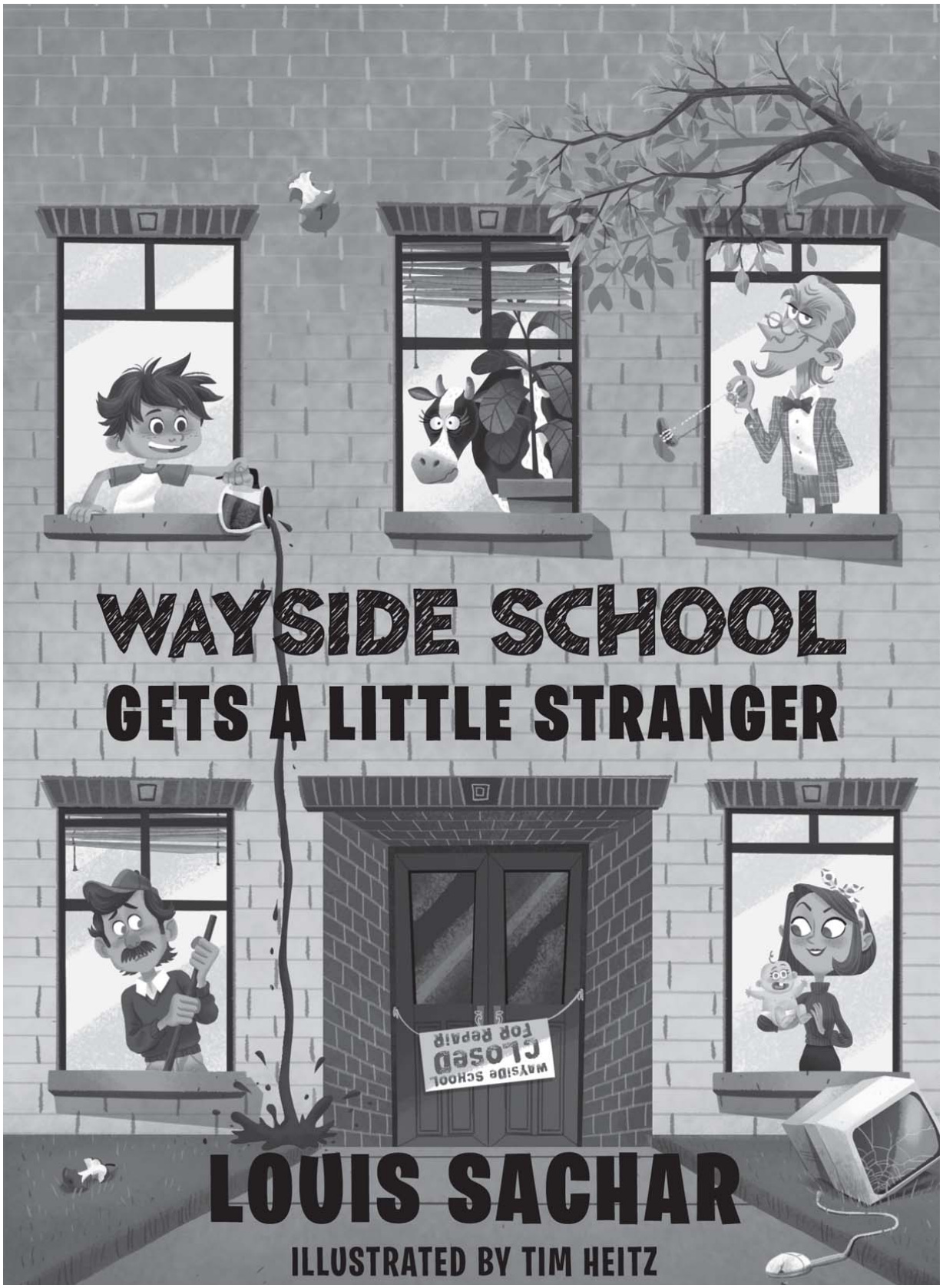
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Dedication

To Carla and Sherre, with love

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Copyright

1

Explanation

For two hundred and forty-three days, a lonely sign hung on the front of the old school building.

On some days a child would come, look at the sign, then sadly walk away.

Or else a child would come, look at the sign, stand on her head, then sadly walk away.

Louis watched them come and go.

But he never said “Hi!” to them. He hid when they came.

It was his job to repair the school.

Louis used to be the yard teacher at Wayside School. He passed out the balls and played with the kids at recess and lunch.

When the school closed, the children were sent to other schools. Horrible schools. No two kids were sent to the same school.

Louis was afraid he’d cry if he talked to them.

But he worked hard. For two hundred and forty-two days, he pushed and pulled, shoveled and mopped. He never left the building. At night he slept on the couch in the teachers’ lounge on the twelfth floor.

Some days it seemed hopeless. The worst part was the smell. He often had to run and stick his head out a window to get a breath of fresh air. But

whenever he felt like quitting, he thought about those poor kids, stuck in those horrible schools, and he just worked harder.

And at last two hundred and forty-three days later, the school was ready to open.

Well, almost ready. There was one little problem.

Suddenly, from somewhere inside the building, or maybe just inside his head, Louis heard a loud “moo.”

He put his hands over his ears and said, “I don’t hear it, I don’t hear it, I don’t hear it,” until the mooing stopped.

He had scrubbed and polished every inch of Wayside School. There were no cows anywhere. He was sure of it! Still, every once in a while, he heard something go “moo.” Or at least he thought he did.

He took the sign off the door.

But before you enter, you should know something about Wayside School.

Wayside School is a thirty-story building with one room on each floor, except there is no nineteenth story.

Mrs. Jewls teaches the class on the thirtieth story.

Miss Zarves teaches the class on the nineteenth story. There is no Miss Zarves.

Understand?

Good; explain it to me.

“Louis!” someone shouted.

He turned to see a red and blue overcoat running toward him. “Hi, Sharie!” he said. He couldn’t see her face, but he knew she had to be somewhere inside the coat.

Sharie jumped into his arms.

“I bet you’re glad to be back,” said Louis.

“You bet!” said Sharie. “Now I can finally get some sleep!”

All around the playground, old friends were getting back together.

“Hi, old pal!” said John.

“Hey, good buddy,” said Joe.

“Bebe!” yelled Calvin from one side of the playground.

“Calvin!” shouted Bebe from the other.

They ran and smashed into each other.

“Hi, Eric, good to see you,” said Eric.

“Hey, good to see you too,” said Eric. “Oh, look. There’s Eric!”

“Hi, Eric! Hi, Eric!”

“Hi, Eric.”

“Hi, Eric.”

Even Kathy said hello to everybody.

“Hey, Big Ears!” she said to Myron as she slapped him on the back. “What’s happ’nin’, Smelly?” she asked Dameon. “You didn’t take a bath for two hundred and forty-three days, did you? Hi, Allison. Did you get uglier while you were away, or were you always this ugly and I just forgot?”

“That’s a nice sweater, Kathy,” said Allison, who always tried to say something nice.

Kathy moved on to Terrence. “I’m sure glad to see you, Terrence!” she said.

“You are?” asked Terrence.

“Yes,” said Kathy. “I thought you’d be in jail by now.”

Todd came running across the playground.

“Hi, Todd!” shouted Sharie, right in Louis’s ear.

Todd kept running.

“Hey, Todd!” called Jason. “Good to see you!”

“Hi, Todd!” called Myron and D. J.

But Todd didn’t answer. He just kept running until he reached the school building.

Then he kissed Wayside School.

Out of all the schools, Todd had been sent to the very worst one. It was awful! The first thing he had to do every morning was—

Wait a second. I don’t have to tell you. You already know.

Todd was sent to your school.

2

A Message from the Principal

Dameon hurried up the stairs. He couldn’t wait to see Mrs. Jewls, his favorite teacher in the whole world.

But the thirtieth floor was a lot higher up than he remembered, even if there was no nineteenth.

By the time he got up there, his legs hurt, his side ached, and he had a blister on the back of his ankle where it rubbed against his sneaker.

He stumbled into the room and collapsed on the floor. “Hi, Mrs. Jewls,” he gasped.

“Hi, Dameon, welcome back!” said Mrs. Jewls.

Dameon looked up at her. Something seemed different about her, but he wasn’t sure what it was.

“Oh, Dameon, would you do me a favor?” she asked.

“Sure,” said Dameon.

“I left my pencil in the office,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Would you mind going down and getting it for me?”

“No problem,” said Dameon.

“It’s yellow,” said Mrs. Jewls. “It has a point at one end and a red eraser at the other.”

Dameon got to his feet and headed down the stairs.

One by one the other children staggered into the classroom, huffing and puffing. They were all out of shape.

Still, they were very excited to be back in Mrs. Jewls’s class. Shouts of joy could be heard from every comer of the room.

Mrs. Jewls held up two fingers.

All the children became quiet. Joy stopped shouting.

Mrs. Jewls told the children to sit at their old desks. “So, did anyone learn anything at your other schools?” she asked.

Mac raised his hand. “Oooh! Ooohl” he grunted.

“Yes, Mac,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Civilization!” declared Mac.

“What about civilization?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“We learned it,” said Mac.

“That’s very impressive,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Would you like to tell the class something about civilization?”

Mac thought a moment. “I don’t remember,” he said. “But I know we learned it.”

“That’s good, Mac,” said Mrs. Jewls. “Anyone else learn anything?”

Rondi raised her hand. “Evaporation,” she said.

“Good,” said Mrs. Jewls. “What is evaporation?”

“I don’t know,” said Rondi.

Dana raised her hand. “I learned about exaggeration,” she said. “It was all my teacher ever talked about. We had like ten thousand tests on it and the teacher would kill you if you didn’t spell it right.”

“That’s very good, Dana!” said Mrs. Jewls. “You learned your lesson well.”

“I did?” asked Dana.

Mrs. Jewls shrugged. “Well, I guess we’ll just continue where we left off.”

Just then Mr. Kidswatter’s voice came over the P.A. system. **“Good morning, boys and girls.”**

Mr. Kidswatter was the principal. He paused a moment because he thought every kid in school was saying “Good morning, Mr. Kidswatter” back to him.

Nobody said it.

Sharie buried her head in her huge coat, closed her eyes, and went to sleep.

“Welcome back to Wayside School!” said Mr. Kidswatter. **“I know I’m sure glad to be back. It was wonderful to see all your bright and chipper faces this morning. I missed every single one of you.**

“And welcome back to Miss Mush, too. Today’s lunch menu will be baked liver in purple sauce. Miss Mush actually cooked this before the school was closed, but she assures me it is still as tasty as ever!”

“I’m sure it is,” said Myron.

“A safety reminder. Now, it has been a while since you’ve had to rush up and down the stairs, and I want to make sure there are no accidents. So remember this simple rule. When you go up the stairs, stay to your right. When you go down the stairs, stay to your left. That way, there should be no problems.

“Okay, let’s all have a good day. And remember, I’m your friend. And you’re my friends. And if you ever need a friend, you can always come to me.”

“Isn’t that nice,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“What a bunch of baloney! There I was, lying on a beach in Jamaica, when suddenly I get a fax that the dumb school was back open. Well, those kids better not bother me. My friends? That’s a joke! Like I would really want to be friends with those little snot-nose— ***What?*** **Don’t tell me to shut up! You shut up! What’s on? You mean**

they’re hearing what I’m saying right this very second? Well, how do you turn it off? What button? I don’t see a red button. There is no red button. Oh, here it

FLEW
HUE
Skew
DEW
RUE
DUE
Phew!

Poetry

Mrs. Jewls told everyone to pick a color and write a poem about it.

"Huh?" said Joy.

"For example," said Mrs. Jewls, "if brown was your favorite color, you might write: 'At the circus I saw a clown. On his face was a great big frown. His sad eyes were big and brown.'"

"Could you repeat that just a little bit slower?" asked Joy.

Mrs. Jewls repeated it for her.

"Ooh, I'm going to do purple!" said Rondi. Rondi loved anything purple.

"You can't do purple," said Allison. "I'm doing it."

"So?" said Rondi. "Mrs. Jewls didn't say two people couldn't do the same color."

"But purple is my favorite color in the world," said Allison.

Rondi and Allison were best friends, but Allison always got her way.

Rondi switched to blue.

Joe raised his hand. "I don't know what rhymes with red," he said.

Mrs. Jewls gave him a few suggestions. "Bed, led, wed. Think of words that end in 'e-d.'"

"Oh, I get it!" said Joe. He set to work.

Rondi tried to think of words that rhymed with blue. She raised her hand. "Mrs. Jewls!" she said. "I chose blue. Can I rhyme that with zoo?"

"Yes, that would be a good rhyme," agreed Mrs. Jewls.

"How about glue?" asked Rondi.

"Yes, that rhymes too," said Mrs. Jewls.

"Oh, I know!" said Rondi. "How about stew?"

"Just pick one and get started," said Mrs. Jewls.

Rondi smiled. "This is fun," she told Allison. "There are lots of words that rhyme with blue."

Allison grunted.

Nothing rhymed with purple. In her mind, Allison had gone through every letter of the alphabet *aurple, burple, curple, durple* . . . all the way to *zurple.*

But after making a big stink over it with Rondi, she couldn't switch colors now.

Rondi was just about to start her poem when she got an even better idea: Love That's True. "Poets are always writing about Love That's True, aren't they, Mrs. Jewls?"

"Sometimes," said Mrs. Jewls.

Rondi smiled. Except she really didn't know much about true love.

"Morning dew!" she said. "Poets write about morning dew too, don't they, Mrs. Jewls?"

"I believe so," said Mrs. Jewls.

Dana walked to Mrs. Jewls's desk. "I can't think of anything that rhymes with pink," she complained.

"I'm sure you'll *think* of something," said Mrs. Jewls. She winked at her.

"I can't think," said Dana. "My mind's on the blink. I'm no good at poetry. I stink!"

"Just keep trying," said Mrs. Jewls.

Dana returned to her seat. She started to put her name on her paper, but her pen wouldn't write. "Great!" she complained. "Now my pen's out of ink!"

"Hey, Dana," whispered John. "Do you want to borrow my pen?"

"Sure," said Dana.

"Too bad, I'm using it," said John. Then he and Joe cracked up.

Meanwhile, Allison was going through the alphabet for the tenth time. . . . *Murple, nurple, ourple, qurple,* . . . she thought.

"My left shoe!" exclaimed Rondi.

"You better choose something, Rondi, and get started," advised Mrs. Jewls.

"I got it!" said Rondi. "A Bird That Flew!"

At the end of the day, the children turned in their poems.

Yellow

by Kathy

I don't feel too well, oh
I don't know who to tell, oh
I'm sick and I smell, oh

My barf is yellow

Green

by Stephen

The swimming pool has lots of chlorine.
It turned my hair green.

Brown

by Joy

At the circus I saw a clown.
On his face was a great big frown.
His sad eyes were big and brown.

Red

by Joe

The fire truck is red!
It hurried!
The siren wailed!
The house burned!
The firemen saved
The baby who screamed.

Pink

by Dana

My favorite color is pink.
John is a ratfink!

Purple

by Allison

The baby won't stop crying.
His face is turning purple.
Will anything make him feel better?
I bet a burp'll.

Blue
by Rondi

That was as far as she got.

4

Doctor Pickle

Actually his name was Doctor Pickell, with the accent on the second syllable. But that wasn't why everyone called him Dr. Pickle.

Dr. Pickle was a psychiatrist. He had thick eyebrows and wore tiny glasses. He had a small beard on the tip of his pointed chin.

A psychiatrist is a doctor who doesn't cure people with sick bodies. He cures people with sick minds.

Although Dr. Pickle had a pretty sick mind himself.

One day a woman came into his office. She smoked too much, and she wanted him to help her quit.

"I know that smoking is no good for me," she said as she puffed on her cigarette. "It's bad for my heart. It fills my lungs with gunk. And my husband won't kiss me because my breath stinks. But I can't quit!"

She finished her cigarette, smushed it out in an ashtray, then immediately lit another one.

"Have a seat," said Dr. Pickle.

She sat down on the couch.

"Look into my eyes," said Dr. Pickle.

The woman stared into his deep, penetrating eyes.

Dr. Pickle held up a gold chain. At the end of the chain was a green stone that was almost transparent but not quite. It looked like a pickle.

Hence, his name.

"Watch the pickle," he said, as he gently moved the chain.

The pickle went back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

The woman's eyes went back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

"Put down your cigarette," Dr. Pickle said in a strong but gentle voice.

The woman set her cigarette in the ashtray as she continued to stare at the pickle.

"You are getting sleepy," said Dr. Pickle. "Your eyelids are getting heavy."

The woman blinked her eyes.

"When I count to three," said Dr. Pickle, "you will fall into a deep, deep sleep. One . . . two . . . three."

The woman's eyes closed.

Dr. Pickle put down the pickle. "Can you hear me?" he asked.

"Yes," said the woman, in a low voice from deep inside her.

"You will do what I say," said Dr. Pickle.

"I - will - do - what - you - say," the woman repeated.

“I am going to count to five,” said Dr. Pickle. “And then you will wake up. And, as usual, you will want to smoke a cigarette.”

“I - will - want - to - smoke - a - cigarette,” the woman repeated.

“But when you put the cigarette in your mouth,” said Dr. Pickle, “it will feel just like a worm. A wiggling, slimy worm.”

“A - yucky - icky - worm,” repeated the woman.

“Good,” said Dr. Pickle. “Now just one more thing.” He rubbed his beard and smiled. “Whenever your husband says the word ‘potato,’ you will slap him across the face.”

“When - Fred - says - ‘potato’ - I - will - slap - his - face.”

“Good,” said Dr. Pickle. He counted to five.

The woman woke up.

“So do you think you can help me?” she asked in her normal voice, as she reached for her cigarette.

Dr. Pickle shrugged.

She put her cigarette in her mouth, then screamed as she pulled it out.

She looked at the cigarette, puzzled. “Hm?” she said. She placed it back in her mouth, then spit it out onto the floor.

“I’m sorry,” she said, a little confused. She picked up the cigarette and put it in the ashtray.

“That’s all right,” said Dr. Pickle.

She took out a new cigarette from her pack, but as soon as she put that in her mouth, she spit it out too.

“I’m sorry,” she said again. “I don’t know what’s come over me.”

She walked out of his office shaking her head. She dropped her pack of cigarettes in the trash.

She never smoked again.

It was an interesting thing about the word “potato.” Whenever Fred said it, she slapped him. And he’d ask her why she slapped him, but she never remembered slapping him, so they’d get in a big fight, each calling the other crazy. Then they’d kiss and make up, which was nice because her breath didn’t stink.

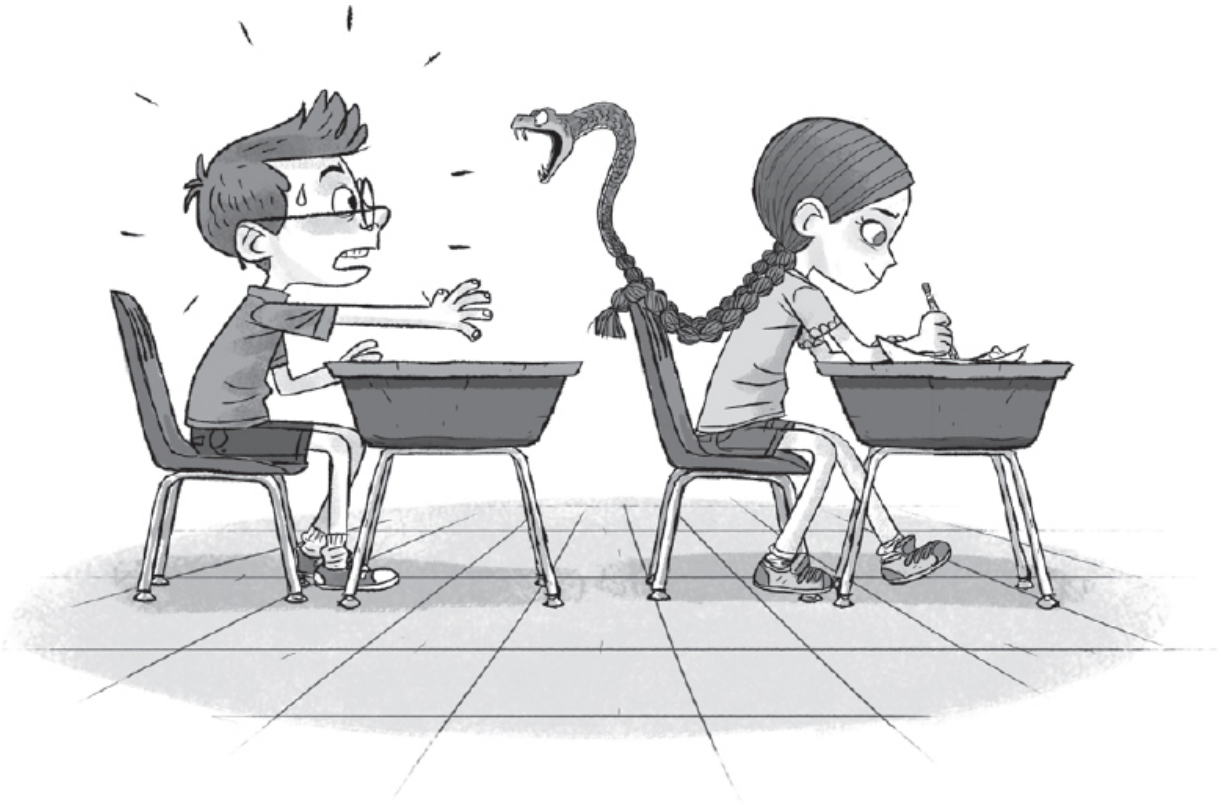
They never figured out it had anything to do with saying “potato.” How could they?

But deep down they both must have realized it somehow, because while they used to eat lots of potatoes, they gradually ate fewer and fewer, until they finally stopped eating them altogether.

Dr. Pickle was a good doctor, but he kept playing those kinds of jokes on people. There was a woman who quacked like a duck whenever she saw a freight train with more than twenty cars. There was a man who took off his shoe anytime someone said “parking meter.”

Eventually Dr. Pickle was caught and he was no longer allowed to practice psychiatry. So he had to find another job.

He became a counselor at an elementary school.



5

A Story with a Disappointing Ending

Paul’s father was a security guard at a museum. The museum had a very famous painting.

It was painted by Leonardo da Vinci. It was called the *Mona Lisa.*

Next to the painting was a sign.

DO NOT TOUCH!

All day Paul’s father made sure nobody touched the painting.

At night, after the museum closed, Paul's father was alone. Just him and the *Mona Lisa.*

And the sign. Do not touch! Do not touch! Do not . . .

He was dying to touch it. The tips of his fingers tingled with desire.

But this story isn't about Paul's father. It's about Paul.

Paul was a student in Mrs. Jewls's class. He sat behind Leslie.

Leslie had two long brown pigtails that reached down to her waist. They just hung there, all day, right in front of Paul's face.

The Mona Leslie.

Do not touch! Do not touch! Do not . . .

Paul reached out, grabbed, and yanked!

"Yaaaaaaaahhhhhhhh!" screamed Leslie.

Mrs. Jewls sent Paul to the counselor's office.

The counselor's office was on the fourth floor. Paul had never been there before.

Like every student in Wayside School, he was afraid of the counselor. The counselor had a very scary face, with big, bushy eyebrows and a little beard on his pointed chin.

Paul knocked on the door.

"Come in," said the counselor.

Paul entered and sat down on the couch.

"What's the problem?" asked the counselor.

"I pulled Leslie's pigtails again," said Paul. "I know it's wrong, but I just can't help myself."

"Watch the pickle," said the counselor.

Paul's eyes went back and forth as he stared at the swaying pickle.

"You are getting sleepy," said the counselor. "Your eyelids are getting heavy."

Paul suddenly felt very tired. He could hardly keep his eyes open.

'When I count to three," said the counselor, "you will fall into a deep, deep sleep. One . . . two . . . three."

Paul closed his eyes. He wasn't exactly asleep. He felt like he was living in a dream. But it was a very pleasant dream. He felt happy and safe.

"Can you hear me?" asked the counselor.

"Yes," said Paul. He was no longer afraid of the counselor. In fact, he liked him a lot.

“You will do what I say,” said the counselor.

“I - will - do - what - you - say,” Paul repeated.

“I am going to count to five,” said the counselor. “And then you will wake up. You will return to your classroom. You will take your seat behind Leslie. You will want to pull one of her pigtails. But when you reach for it, it will turn into a rattlesnake.”

“Leslie’s - pigtails - are - rattlesnakes,” said Paul.

“Very good,” said the counselor. “Now just one more thing.” He rubbed his beard and smiled.

“When Leslie says the word ‘pencil,’ her ears will turn into candy. The most delicious candy in the world. The candy of your dreams.”

Paul licked his lips. He could almost taste the rich chocolate and chewy caramel.

“And you will try to eat the candy.”

“When - Leslie - says - ‘pencil’ - I - will - eat - her - ears,” said Paul.

The counselor counted to five.

Paul’s eyes blinked open.

“You may go back to class now,” said the counselor.

“I’m not in trouble?” asked Paul.

“No,” said the counselor.

Paul shrugged. He returned to class. As he passed Leslie, she stuck out her tongue at him.

He sat down behind her.

“What’d the counselor do to you?” asked Eric Fry.

“Nothing,” said Paul. “He’s a nice man.”

He looked at Leslie’s pigtails. He had pulled the one on the left. But he still wanted to pull the one on the right.

He lunged for it.

It hissed at him. Its tail rattled.

He screamed and fell back over in his chair.

Everyone laughed.

“Paul, are you all right?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Uh, I guess so,” said Paul, getting back up.

He didn’t feel much like pulling Leslie’s pigtails anymore.

It was just a short while later that Leslie’s pencil point broke.

“Oh, great!” she complained.

“What’s the matter?” asked Jenny, who sat next to Leslie.

Leslie showed her the broken pencil point.

“You want to borrow mine?” asked Eric Fry, who sat behind Jenny.

“No, I’ll just go sharpen it,” said Leslie. She went to the back of the room and sharpened her pencil.

She returned to her seat. She set the pencil on her desk, but it rolled off when she sat down.

“Hey, where’d it go?” she asked, turning around.

“Where’d what go?” asked Paul.

“There it is,” said Jenny. “Under Paul’s desk.”

“What’s under my desk?” asked Paul.

“I’ll get it,” said Eric Fry. He reached under Paul’s desk, picked up the pencil, and handed it to Leslie.

She thanked him and everyone returned to work.

6

Pet Day

All the kids in Mrs. Jewls's class brought a pet to school. The room was very noisy. Dogs barked. Cats meowed. A frog croaked. A pig squealed. A cow mooed. Birds tweeted.

Mrs. Jewls held up two fingers.

All the animals became quiet.

Stephen didn't have a pet. So he brought an orange. He kept it in a cage on his desk so it couldn't escape.

Todd brought Ralphie, his baby brother.

"Todd?" said Mrs. Jewls.

Todd barked.

"You cannot have a pet human," said Mrs. Jewls.

"He doesn't bite," Todd assured her.

Joy told Todd to sit and be quiet.

Mrs. Jewls got a large piece of poster board from the supply closet. "Let's make a chart," she said.

Across the top of her chart she wrote, "Name of Kid," "Kind of Pet," "Name of Pet."

She started with Deedee. She wrote "Deedee" under "Name of Kid." "And you have a dog," she said.

"Cat," said Deedee.

"Cat?" asked Mrs. Jewls.

Deedee nodded as she petted her dog.

Mrs. Jewls moved on to Ron. "Ron, I see you have a cat."

"Dog," said Ron, as he stroked the cat on his lap.

Mrs. Jewls shrugged. "Okay," she said.

"He's my dog," said D. J.

"Ron has your dog?" asked Mrs. Jewls.

"Ron has a cat," said D. J.

"That's what I thought," said Mrs. Jewls. "But what—"

"What's a dog," said Jenny.

Mrs. Jewls covered her ears and shook her head. "Let's start all over again," said Mrs. Jewls. She got a new piece of poster board from the supply closet.

"Mac, what's your dog's name?"

"What's my dog's name," said Jenny.

"I'm not talking to you, Jenny. I'm talking to Mac."

"He can't talk," said Mac.

“Who can’t talk?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“Mac,” said Mac.

Billy barked at Mac.

Mac barked at Billy.

Todd barked at both of them.

Joy made Todd lie down by her feet.

Mrs. Jewls moved on. “What’s your pet, Myron?” she asked.

“Your pet’s a turtle,” said Sharie.

“What?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“What is Jenny’s pet,” said Sharie.

“Jenny’s pet is a dog!” said Mrs. Jewls. “What’s his name, Jenny?”

Jenny nodded. Her dog sat up straight and tall and seemed to smile at Mrs. Jewls.

“He’s handsome,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“My mouse is handsome,” said Benjamin. Benjamin had a little white mouse in a cage on his desk.

“If you like mice,” said Dana, making a face.

“Mrs. Jewls likes mice,” said Calvin. “She eats them.”

“Gross!” said Dana.

“He won’t come when you call him,” said Kathy. “He doesn’t know his name.”

Billy meowed.

“Will Mrs. Jewls eat yogurt?” asked John.

“No way!” said Calvin.

“I will too,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I like yogurt. I like strawberry best.”

Maurecia beamed. “Mrs. Jewls likes strawberry best,” she bragged.

“You shouldn’t pick favorites,” complained Dana.

“Do you like crackers, Mrs. Jewls?” asked Rondi.

“Don’t worry,” said Calvin. “Mrs. Jewls won’t eat crackers.”

“How do you know what I’ll eat, Calvin?” asked Mrs. Jewls, a little annoyed. “I like eating crackers with cheese on top.”

“Oh, gross!” said Myron.

“He won’t come when you call him,” Kathy said again.

“Mac! Keep Mac away from my socks!” shouted Allison.

“Wait,” said Jason. “Now you’ve got my socks, and I’ve got your socks.”

“I can tell the difference between my socks and your socks, Jason,” said Allison.

Mrs. Jewls covered her ears and shook her head. She moved on. “What’s your pet, Dameon?” she asked.

“I already told you he was a turtle,” said Sharie.

“I wasn’t talking to you, Sharie,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I was talking to Dameon.”

“Your nose a ferret,” said Dameon.

“My nose a ferret?” asked Mrs. Jewls.

“My nose a hamster,” said Joe.

Billy bleated.

Mrs. Jewls licked her leg.

“Hey, Paul,” said Leslie. “I like your pigtails.”

“Thanks,” said Paul. “May I touch your pajamas?”

“Go ahead,” said Bebe, who was already petting Leslie’s pajamas. “She won’t scratch you.”

“This is crazy!” shouted Terrence.

“He’s cute,” said Dana.

Name of Kid	Kind of Pet	Name of Pet
Deedee	Dog	Cat
Ron	Cat	Dog
D.J.	Dog	O.K.
Jenny	Dog	What
Mac	Dog	Mac
Joy	Dog	Todd
Sharie	Turtle	Yorpet
Benjamin	Mouse	Handsome
Calvin	Cat	Mrs. Jewls
Kathy	Skunk	Gross
John	Frog	Yogurt
Maurecia	Cat	Strawberry
Rondi	Bird	Crackers
Myron	Chipmunk	Cheese
Allison	Cat	Socks
Jason	Cat	Socks

Dameon	Ferret	Yorno
Joe	Hamster	Mino
Paul	Pig	Tails
Leslie	Cat	Pajamas
Terrence	Dog	Crazy
Eric Fry	Kid (Goat)	Billy
Eric Bacon	Dog	Billy
Erin Ovens	Cat	Billy
Dana	Dog	Pugsy
Bebe	Bird	Picasso
Todd	Kid (Human)	Ralphie
Stephen	Orange	Fido

7

A Bad Word

Early in the morning, a white limousine drove up to Wayside School.

Just like always.

The chauffeur got out of the car, then opened the passenger door.

Just like always.

Mr. Kidswatter stepped out of the car. “Thank you, James,” he said.

“My name is David,” said the chauffeur.

Just like always.

Mr. Kidswatter entered the school building. “Good morning, Mr. Kidswatter,” said Mrs. Day, the school secretary. She handed him a cup of hot coffee.

Just like always.

“Thank you, Miss Night,” said Mr. Kidswatter.

He walked into his office.

Except his office door was closed.

He smashed into it, spilling coffee all over his green suit.

“Who closed my door?” he demanded.

“Why didn’t you just open it?” asked Mrs. Day.

“It’s *always* open in the morning,” said Mr. Kidswatter. “How was I supposed to know it was closed *this time*?”

Up on the thirtieth story, Mrs. Jewls took roll.

Todd was absent.

“Oh dear, I hope Todd is all right,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Todd’s never all right!” said Joy.

She and Maurecia laughed.

Dameon looked at Mrs. Jewls. Ever since he returned to Wayside School, he’d thought there was something *different* about her, but he still couldn’t figure out what it was.

Mr. Kidswatter’s voice came over the P.A. system. **“Good morning, boys and girls.”**

There was the usual pause.

“Today I want to talk about doors,” said Mr. Kidswatter.

“This should be interesting,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Do you know how many doors there are in this school building?” asked Mr. Kidswatter.

Mrs. Jewls shook her head.

“Well, there are a lot! Over thirty! And some of you probably have doors at home too. Maybe more than one. All those doors. Think about it.”

“Well, Mr. Kidswatter has certainly given us something to think about this morning,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“So remember,” said Mr. Kidswatter. **“And please be careful! Always check to see if a door is open before going through it. And if it’s not open, open it. If you can’t open it yourself, ask someone to open it for you. This may not make a lot of sense to you now, but someday you’ll thank me.”**

Mrs. Jewls looked around the class. “That’s good advice,” she said. “I think most of you already knew it, but at least it’s nice to know we have a principal who cares.”

“I hate doors!” shouted Mr. Kidswatter. **“It’s a dumb word. Door. Door. Door. Who made up that word, anyway?”**

Mrs. Jewls waited a little longer, but Mr. Kidswatter seemed to be finished. “Some people just don’t like doors,” she said.

“I have made a new rule!” declared Mr. Kidswatter. **“You may no longer say that word. You know what word I mean—but don’t say it! Instead, I have made up a new word for you: ‘Goozack.’ Open the goozack. Shut the goozack. Lock the goozack. Don’t you think that’s a better word? I do. From now on, that other word is a bad word. I have made my decision.”**

Everyone turned around and looked at the goozack.

Suddenly it opened.

Todd entered. “I’m sorry I’m late,” he said.

“That’s okay,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I’m just glad you’re not sick or hurt.”

“My dad locked his keys in the car,” Todd explained. “We had to use a coat hanger to unlock the door.”

Everyone gasped.

Mrs. Jewls made Todd write his name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

8

Santa Claus

‘Twas the last day of school
Before winter vacation,
And the children were having
A small celebration.

Their artwork was hung
By the blackboards with pride:
Snowmen, and mooses,
And a joyful sleigh ride.

They ate homemade cookies,
(Red and green ones, of course.)
When Kathy declared,
“I don’t believe in Santa Claus!”

She just opened her mouth,
And said what she said.
“Santa Claus isn’t real,
And besides that, he’s dead!

“So you bet I will pout,
And you bet I will cry.
“You bet I will shout,
I’m telling you why. . . .”

Stephen covered his ears. “No, you’re wrong!” he shouted. “It’s not true. There is a Santa Claus. I know there is!”

“Ho, ho, ho,” laughed Kathy.

“Kathy is just saying that because she never gets any presents,” said Jason.

“All she ever gets is a lump of coal!” said Rondi.

“Wrong!” said Kathy. “I get lots of presents. My parents buy them for me. They have lots of money. They buy me anything I want.”

She bit off the head of a reindeer cookie. “The only thing that matters is how rich your parents are. If they have lots of money, then you’ll get lots of good presents. If they’re poor, then you’ll just get a few crummy presents.”

Everyone tried to argue with her, but Kathy just asked them all the old questions, like “How does a fat man fit down a skinny chimney?” or “How could he visit everyone’s house in the whole world in one night?”

And of course nobody knew the answers. Nobody ever has.

“Only Santa knows the answers to those questions,” said Rondi.

“Don’t you even like Christmas?” asked Stephen.

“Sure,” said Kathy.

“I get lots of presents,
And I don’t have to work.”
Then she stuck out her tongue
and called Stephen a jerk.

Poor Stephen sputtered
As his face turned quite blue,
“If you don’t believe in Santa,
He won’t believe in you!”

But Kathy just yelped.
“You know that it’s true!
Do you still *believe in the Easter bunny,*
The tooth fairy, and Miss Zarves too?”

“Let’s ask Mrs. Jewls!” said Maurecia.
“She’s a teacher who’s wise.
Let’s ask Mrs. Jewls.
She never lies!”

The children crowded round
Their wise teacher’s desk
And asked her the question
Never found on a test.

“Is there a Santa?
You’re a teacher with smarts!
Is Santa Claus real?”
They asked with pure hearts.

And oh, Mrs. Jewls,
That teacher so wise,
Looked at their faces
And bright, eager eyes.

She had to say something.
It was her job to reply.
"Tell them," yelped Kathy.
"That reindeer can't fly!"

Outside the window
Snowflakes were falling. . . .
Inside the window
Mrs. Jewls was stalling. . . .

"Are our parents all liars?"
"Is it all just a trick
To make us be good
For fear of St. Nick?"

"Tell us the truth;
Don't try to fake it.
Is there a Santa?
Let us know; we can take it."

Mrs. Jewls cleared her throat,
Then she cleared it again.
She put down her pencil.
She picked up her pen.

"Hey, look!" shouted Leslie.
"Look there! Who's that?
Someone is coming in
Through the goozack!"

Sure enough, the door opened.
It had to open quite wide!
As a strange-looking stranger

Stepped sideways inside.

He wore a red suit
And had a white, fluffy beard.
And even for Wayside
He looked pretty weird!

His fat belly shook
Like a bowl full of Jell-O.
There was no doubt about it.
They knew that fellow!

It was Louis, the yard teacher.

"What are you doing in that stupid suit, Louis?" asked Sharie. "Aren't you hot?"

"Why are you wearing a fake beard?" asked Todd.

"Is that a pillow under your jacket?" asked Jason.

Kathy was delighted. "See!" she said. "That proves there's no Santa Claus! If there was, Louis wouldn't have to dress up like a fool and pretend to be him."

"I'm not Louis," said Louis. "I'm Santa Claus. Ho! Ho—"

"You're lying to us, Louis," said John. "Everyone is always lying to us. Kathy's right. Christmas is nothing but a dirty, stinking lie!"

"I was just trying to bring a little holiday cheer," said Louis.

"Go home, Jerome," said Terrence.

"Now, that's no way to talk to Louis," said Mrs. Jewls. "Louis is one of Santa's special helpers."

"Really, Louis?" asked Deedee.

Louis looked at Mrs. Jewls. "That's right," he said.

The children were all very impressed.

"Have you ever met him?" demanded Kathy.

"Well, no, not exactly," Louis admitted.

"See!" said Kathy. "It's just another lie."

"You don't have to meet Santa to be one of his special helpers," said Mrs. Jewls.

"Then how do you know what he wants you to do?" asked John.

“That’s easy,” said Mrs. Jewls. “You just have to be nice to other people. Whenever you give someone a present or sing a holiday song, you’re helping Santa Claus. To me, that’s what Christmas is all about. Helping Santa Claus!”

“Can I be one of his helpers?” asked Dameon.

“You bet,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“Hey, everybody,” shouted Dameon. “I’m one of Santa’s helpers!”

“Me too,” said Allison.

“There must be a Santa Claus!” cheered Stephen. “Because it feels so good to help him.”

So the children all helped Santa,
In every way they could,
By singing songs and giving gifts
And just by being good.

“But there is no Santa Claus!”
Kathy continued to yelp.
“Well, if that’s the case,” said Mrs. Jewls.
“He must really need our help.”

9

Something Different about Mrs. Jewls

The children returned from Christmas vacation. On each desk were two knitting needles and a hunk of yarn.

"Today we are going to learn how to knit," said Mrs. Jewls.

She showed the class how it was done. "See, you stick this needle through here, then wrap this around this like this, stick this through this, pull this like this, and then you stick this here. Any questions?"

Everyone stared at her.

"Good," said Mrs. Jewls. "I want everybody to make socks. Okay, get started."

Dameon looked at his knitting needles. He didn't have a clue.

He looked back at Mrs. Jewls. Now, more than ever, he was sure she was somehow *different*.

She was sitting at her desk, knitting and eating Baloneos. Dameon couldn't remember Mrs. Jewls ever eating a Baloneo before.

A Baloneo was an Oreo cookie, except instead of the white part, there was a round hunk of baloney.

Miss Mush invented them.

"Hey, Mac," whispered Dameon. "Does Mrs. Jewls seem different to you?"

"She's fat," said Mac.

"That's not a nice thing to say," said Dameon.

"I didn't say it to Mrs. Jewls," said Mac. "I didn't go, 'Hey, Mrs. Jewls. You're fat!'"

Mrs. Jewls cleared her throat as she stood up. She walked around the room. "Very nice, D. J.," she said. "You're doing fine, Rondi."

She stopped at Joe's desk.

"Oh, Joe!" she gushed. "Look, everybody, I want you to see Joe's sock!" She held it up. "Isn't it the most beautiful sock you ever saw?"

It was a great sock. Everybody oohed and aahed.

Joe was as surprised as anyone. He didn't know he knew how to make socks. But the boy was born to knit.

Mrs. Jewls started to cry. "I love this sock," she sobbed.

"Uh-oh," said Kathy. "I think she's finally flipped out!"

"I love you, Kathy," said Mrs. Jewls. She looked around the room. "I love all of you."

She put her hand on Kathy's desk. "I love this desk," she said. "I love the blackboard. I love the clock on the wall."

There was a ruler on the floor.

Mrs. Jewls picked it up. “I love this ruler,” she declared.

“Hey, that’s mine!” said Dana. “But uh, that’s okay, Mrs. Jewls. You can have it.”

“I don’t want your ruler, Dana,” said Mrs. Jewls, handing it to her.

“You want my pair of scissors?” offered Sharie.

“Don’t give her anything sharp!” warned Kathy.

Mrs. Jewls wiped away her tears and smiled at the class. “I’m going to miss all of you very much,” she said.

“Are you going away?” asked Dameon.

“Yeah, to the loony bin,” whispered Kathy.

“Are you sick?” asked Eric Ovens.

“No, I’m not sick,” said Mrs. Jewls. “In fact, I’m better than I’ve ever been.” She beamed. “I’m going to have a baby!”

Everyone gasped.

Dameon couldn’t believe it! He was so happy he jumped out of his seat and hugged Mrs. Jewls.

She was soon surrounded by all her students, even Kathy, wanting to hug her.

“Today is my last day here,” Mrs. Jewls told her students. “My doctor doesn’t want me walking up and down thirty flights of stairs every day. I wasn’t even supposed to come today, but I just had to say good-bye.”

“I thought you were getting fat,” said Mac. “But I didn’t want to say anything.”

“Thank you, Mac,” said Mrs. Jewls. “You are very considerate.”

“Can I touch your stomach?” asked Stephen.

Mrs. Jewls laughed. “Sure,” she said.

The children took turns touching her stomach.

“What are you going to name your baby?” asked Allison.

“I don’t know yet,” said Mrs. Jewls. “What do you think?”

“Well, if she’s a girl,” said Allison, “I think you should name her Rainbow Sunshine.”

“That’s a nice name,” said Mrs. Jewls. “And if he’s a boy?”

“Bucket Head,” said Allison. She didn’t like boys.

“If he’s a boy, you should name him Jet Rocket!” said Joe.

“Jet Rocket Jewls,” mused Mrs. Jewls. “That has a nice ring to it. And what if she’s a girl?”

“Cootie Face,” said Joe.

Mrs. Jewls laughed. “So let me get this straight,” she said. “If he’s a boy, I’ll name him Bucket Head.”

“Right,” said Allison and Rondi.

“And if she’s a girl, I’ll name her Cootie Face.”

“Right,” said Joe and John.

Dameon laughed. He knew Mrs. Jewls was only joking. At least he hoped she was.

Terrence placed his palm flat against Mrs. Jewls’s stomach. “Hey,” he exclaimed. “The dude kicked me!”

Suddenly Dameon felt very sad. He was going to miss her a lot! He wiped a tear from his eye. “It’s unfair!” he shouted. “We finally come back to Wayside School after being gone for so long. And now you’re leaving us!”

“I have to,” said Mrs. Jewls.

“I know,” whined Dameon. “You have to make sure that you and your baby are healthy. But it still isn’t fair!”

“I think you’ll like your substitute teacher,” said Mrs. Jewls. “I spoke to him over the vacation. He seems like a very nice man.”

“A man?” asked Dameon. “Cool!”

They all thought it was pretty neat to have a man teacher.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Jewls. “His name is Mr. Gorf.”

10

Mr. Gorf

“Mr. Gorf,” muttered Joy as she walked down the stairs to recess. “Did she say Mr. Gorf?”

Maurecia nodded.

Leslie caught up to them. “Did she say Mr. Gorf?”

“I think so,” said Maurecia.

“Do you think—?” Leslie asked.

“I don’t know,” said Maurecia.

“I hope not,” said Joy.

Before Mrs. Jewls ever came to Wayside School, the children had a teacher named Mrs. Gorf. She wasn’t very nice.

Even Myron was worried. And Myron had never gotten in trouble in his whole life.

“Mr. Gorf might be a good teacher,” said Eric Bacon. “Just because he has the same last name as Mrs. Gorf doesn’t mean he’ll be horrible.”

“That’s right,” said Eric Ovens. “People with the same name can be different.”

“I agree,” said Eric Fry.

“There are probably lots of people named Gorf,” Dameon said hopefully. “I bet if you looked in the phone book, you’d find ten whole pages of Gorfs.”

“Well, I don’t know about you, but I’m not coming to school tomorrow,” said Joy.

“Me neither,” Maurecia agreed.

But the next morning their parents made them all go to school.

Everyone arrived on time. Nobody dared to be late.

But there was no teacher.

Deedee sat down next to Myron. “Is he here?” she whispered.

“Sh!” whispered Myron. He folded his hands on his desk and stared straight ahead.

One by one, the children entered the classroom and quietly sat down at their desks.

They couldn’t take any chances. Mr. Gorf might walk through the door any moment. Or maybe he was already there, hiding in the coat closet, just waiting for someone to do something wrong.

“I didn’t want to come today,” whispered Calvin. “But my parents made me.”

“Sh!” said Bebe. “He might hear you.”

Mr. Kidswatter’s voice came over the P.A. system. **“Good morning, boys and girls.”**

“Good morning, Mr. Kidswatter,” the children all answered together, like good little boys and girls.

They listened attentively to their principal. Then, when Mr. Kidswatter was finished, they took out their arithmetic books and started working.

After that they did social studies, reading, and spelling.

When the recess bell rang, the children put their books neatly in their desks, quietly lined up, and walked out of the room and down the stairs.

"So how's your substitute teacher?" asked Louis, out on the playground.

"Tough!" said Bebe. "I've never worked so hard in my life."

"I did more work before ten o'clock than most people do in a day," said Calvin.

"But he's very fair," Myron quickly added, just in case Mr. Gorf was listening. He might have been hiding in the bushes.

"Yes, he's nice and fair and a very good teacher," said Jenny.

"Very smart too," said Deedee. "We're lucky to have him."

Louis twisted the end of his mustache between his fingers.

After recess the children returned to class and worked until lunchtime. At lunch they ate all the food Miss Mush served them. Their manners were perfect.

Mr. Gorf might have been hiding under the table.

After lunch they returned to class and practiced their handwriting.

Myron looked around. All of a sudden he got a terrible urge to do something. Anything!

"Ugga bugga," he said.

Jenny put her finger to her lips.

"Biff. Boff. Boof!" said Myron, a little louder.

"Sh!" said Jenny.

Myron stood up. "No!" he shouted. "I don't have to be quiet!"

Everyone tried to get Myron to hush up.

Myron climbed on top of his desk. "Look around, folks! There's no teacher! We're doing all this work for nothing!"

"Get down!" whispered Allison. "Do you want to get us all in trouble?"

Myron jumped on top of Allison's desk. "Hi, Allison!" he said. Then he hopped over to Deedee's desk, then Ron's, then Maurecia's.

"Please, Myron," said Maurecia.

"This is fun!" said Myron. He made a great leap and landed on top of the teacher's desk.

Mrs. Jewls had always kept a coffee can full of Tootsie Roll Pops on her desk. It was still there.

"Hey, anyone want a Tootsie Roll Pop?" asked Myron.

Everyone stared at him.

Myron took one for himself. He sat in the teacher's chair, with his feet up on the teacher's desk, and sucked on it.

"Please stop, Myron!" begged Jenny. "What if he's hiding in the closet?"

"Get real!" said Myron. "Why would he hide in the closet?"

"What if Mr. Gorf was married to Mrs. Gorf?" asked Allison.

Myron laughed. "Who would ever want to marry Mrs. Gorf?" he asked.

"Somebody had to marry her," said Rondi. "Or else she wouldn't have been a Mrs."

"What if he loved her very much?" asked Allison. "And then one day she didn't come home from work. And he never saw her again. And he didn't know what happened to her. But he knew she used to teach this class! So he might be hiding in the closet to try to find out if we're the ones who got rid of her."

"If I was married to Mrs. Gorf," said Jason, "I'd be glad she never came home. He should thank us."

"Nice going, Jason!" said Jenny. "If he *is* hiding in the closet, you just told him we're the ones who got rid of his wife."

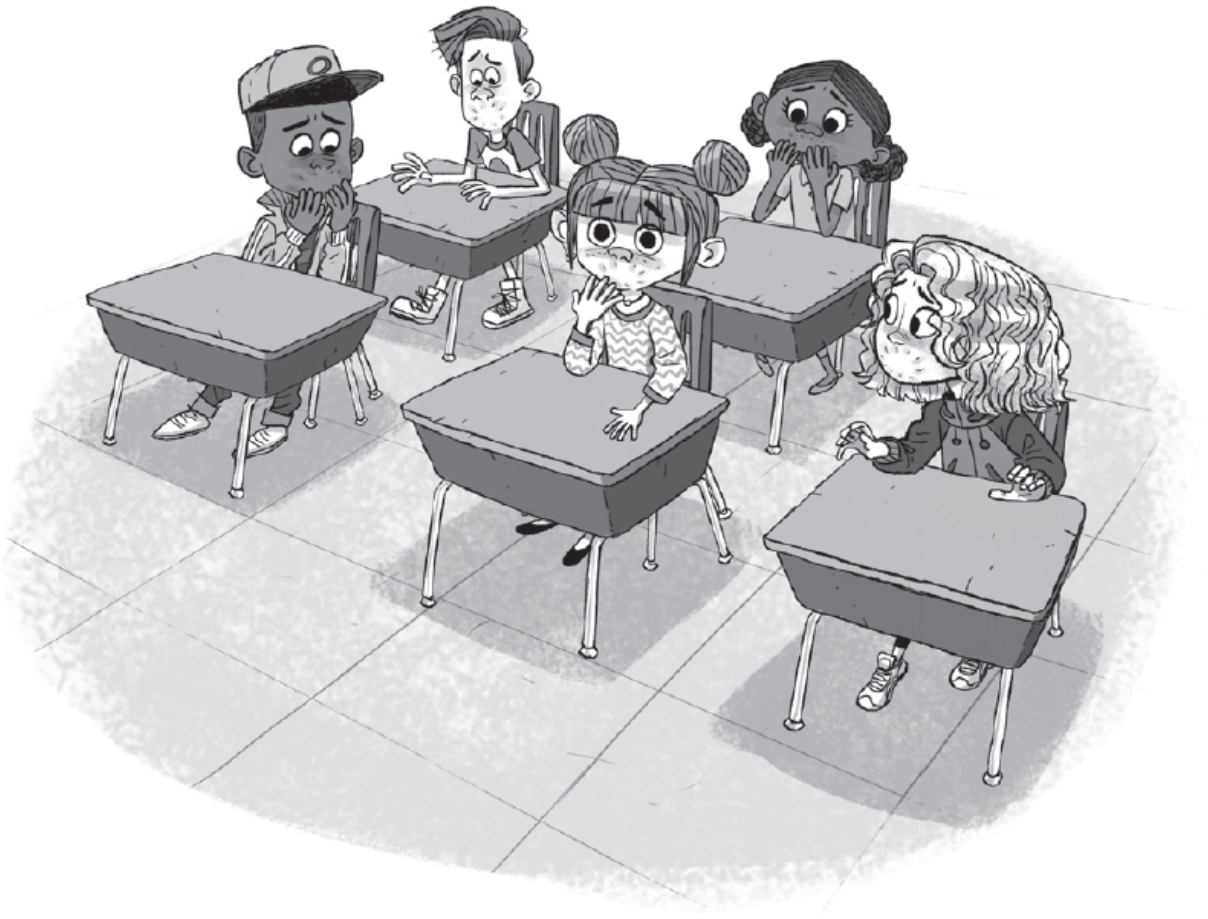
"Well, if I didn't you just did," said Jason.

"It doesn't matter!" shouted Myron. "Because Mr. Gorf is not hiding in the closet!"

Myron went to the back of the room and opened the closet door.

A man stepped out. "Thank you," he said. "I accidentally locked myself in here this morning, and I've been waiting for someone to open the door."

Myron swallowed his Tootsie Roll Pop, stick and all.



11

Voices

“My name is Mr. Gorf,” said the man who stepped out of the closet.

And, surprising as it may seem, the children weren’t afraid.

It was his voice. His voice was full of comfort and wisdom, like an old leather chair in a dusty library. It didn’t matter what he said. It felt good just to listen to him.

He was a handsome man, with neatly combed brown hair and clean fingernails. He carried a brown briefcase.

Nobody even noticed that his nose had three nostrils.

“Since I am going to be your teacher for the next few months, let me tell you a bit about myself. I was born in the Himalayan Mountains in a town called Katmandu.”

“Cat Man Do,” said Terrence. “Cool.”

Everyone laughed. They weren’t laughing at Terrence. There was just something about the name of that city and the way Terrence said it.

Terrence’s voice was like a rusty drainpipe.

“Have you ever been married?” asked Allison. Allison’s voice was like a cat walking across a piano.

“No, I’m a bachelor,” said Mr. Gorf.

Allison smiled, greatly relieved.

“Well, that’s enough about me,” said Mr. Gorf. “How about some of you telling me about yourselves?”

“My name is Mac,” said Mac, without raising his hand. Mac’s voice was like a freight train. “I built the biggest snowman you ever saw. Man, it was huge. I had to stand on a ladder to put the hat on his head. It was a stovepipe hat like Abraham Lincoln wore, but I don’t know why they call it that. We have a microwave oven. Have you ever put a bag of marshmallows in a microwave oven? Man, it’s like—”

Mr. Gorf’s nose flared.

His right nostril flared to the right. His left nostril flared to the left. And the hole in the middle seemed to get larger.

Mac coughed. He tried to speak, but no words came out.

“Thank you, Mac,” said Mr. Gorf. “Anyone else?”

Deedee raised her hand.

“Yes, young lady,” said Mr. Gorf.

Deedee giggled. She liked the way he said “young lady.” “My name is Deedee,” she said. Her voice was small, but full of energy, like a superball. “I like soccer and Ninja Turtles. My favorite—”

Mr. Gorf’s nose flared.

Deedee lost her voice too.

“Who’s next?” asked Mr. Gorf. “Yes, the girl in the polka-dot shirt.”

“My name’s Maurecia,” said Maurecia. “I have two brothers and one sister.”

Maurecia’s voice was like a pineapple milkshake.

Mr. Gorf sucked it up through his nose.

“Hey, what’s going—,” said Todd.

Todd was silent.

“Look at his nose!” shouted Eric Bacon. “It has—”

Eric Bacon had nothing else to say.

“Nobody say anyth—,” Jenny tried to warn. Her voice disappeared up Mr. Gorf’s nose.

Soon the class was quiet.

Mr. Gorf’s middle nostril had snorted all of their voices.

Except for Allison. She remained silent. She knew she’d only get one chance to speak, and she had to wait for just the right moment.

“What good little boys and girls you are,” said Mr. Gorf. “So nice and quiet.” He laughed.

“Of course, this isn’t my real voice,” he said. “I stole this voice from a gentleman I met in Scotland.”

He touched the tip of his nose.

“This is my voice!” he squawked.

If a donkey could talk, and if the donkey had a sore throat and if it spoke with a French accent—that was what Mr. Gorf’s voice sounded like.

But what he said next was even more horrible than his voice.

“Mrs. Gorf was my mommy.”

The children sat frozen in their chairs, too scared to move.

Suddenly there was a knock on the door.

Mr. Gorf touched his nose. “Who is it?” he asked in the pleasant voice he stole from the Scottish gentleman.

“Miss Mush,” said Miss Mush from the other side of the door. “I just came up to say hello and welcome you to Wayside School.”

“That’s very nice of you, Miss Mush,” said Mr. Gorf. “But we’re very busy right now. Maybe we can get together for tea and crumpets sometime.”

Miss Mush giggled. “That sounds lovely,” she said. “By the way, Mr. Gorf, are you married?”

“No, I’m single,” said Mr. Gorf.

“So am I,” said Miss Mush.

“Miss Mush!” shouted Allison. “Help! Mr. Gorf is taking—”

Mr. Gorf’s nose flared.

“Did you say something, Allison?” asked Miss Mush.

Mr. Gorf touched his nose. Then he spoke, this time using Allison’s voice. “Mr. Gorf is taking us on a field trip next week. But he might need help. Do you want to come with us?”

“Maybe,” said Miss Mush. “Thank you, Allison.”

“Oh, don’t thank me,” said Allison’s voice. “Thank Mr. Gorf. He’s the best teacher in the whole world!”

“I’m glad,” said Miss Mush. “He sounds very charming.”

“And so do you,” said Mr. Gorf, speaking like the gentleman from Scotland. He touched his nose.

“See you later, Miss Mush,” said the voice of Eric Ovens.

“Take care,” said Calvin’s voice.

“Have a nice day,” said Kathy’s voice.

12

Nose

Mr. Gorf locked the door. “I don’t want any more interruptions,” he said.

Very quietly, Leslie slipped a piece of paper out of her desk. Then she felt around for a pencil.

Mr. Gorf returned to the teacher’s desk. He opened the top drawer and took out the class list. It had the names of all the children in the class, their parents’ names, and their parents’ home and work phone numbers.

“Let’s play a game!” he said, speaking in his own, normal, French-donkey-with-a-sore-throat voice. “The name of the game is Who Am I Now?”

Leslie found a pencil. She held the piece of paper on her lap, where Mr. Gorf couldn’t see it, and wrote HELP in big letters. She had to get it to Louis, the yard teacher.

Mr. Gorf touched the tip of his nose. “Who am I now?” he asked.

It was a girl’s voice, soft and warm, with just a little bit of a giggle in it.

Everyone looked at Rondi.

“Rondi,” said Mr. Gorf. He opened his briefcase and removed a portable phone. He dialed Rondi’s home number.

“Hello, Mommy,” Mr. Gorf said into the phone, using Rondi’s voice. “No, nothing’s wrong. I just called to say I hate you! You’re the worst mommy in the whole world. You’re ugly and you smell bad! It’s not fair! Out of all the mommies in the world, I got stuck with you!”

He hung up the phone.

Rondi sat crying in her chair.

Mr. Gorf touched his nose. “Isn’t this a good game?” he asked, sounding very much like a sick French donkey. “Rondi is crying. And at home, her mother is crying too.” He laughed. “Too bad you won’t ever be able to tell her you’re sorry, Rondi.”

Leslie carefully folded the piece of paper into a paper airplane. There was one open window, next to Sharie’s desk.

Mr. Gorf touched his nose. “Who am I now?” he asked.

Everyone tried not to look at Joe.

Mr. Gorf called Joe’s mother at work. “Hello, Mommy,” he said. “I hate you! I wish you’d go away forever! Then maybe Daddy will marry somebody good this time.”

Leslie knew she’d only have one chance. It would take a perfect throw. She tossed the paper airplane toward the window.

Mr. Gorf saw it. “Hey!” he shouted.

The airplane sailed closer . . . closer . . . but then at the last second it made a sudden turn, hit the wall, and landed on the floor.

Mr. Gorf laughed. He picked up the airplane and unfolded it. “Help,” he sneered. “No one can help you now! You took my mommy away from me. And I’m going to take your mommies away from you!”

He touched his nose.

“Who am I now?” he asked.

It was Leslie’s voice.

He started to dial her home phone number but was interrupted by a knock on the door.

“Oh, Mr. Gorf!” sang Miss Mush.

“Yes,” said Mr. Gorf, still in Leslie’s voice. He touched his nose and cleared his throat. “I mean, yes?” This time he sounded like a donkey with tonsillitis. He touched his nose again. “Yes?” he asked in the pleasant voice he took from the Scottish gentleman.

“It’s me again,” said Miss Mush. Miss Mush’s voice was like two boots sloshing through mud. “I baked you a pie, Mr. Gorf. To welcome you to Wayside School.”

Mr. Gorf sighed. “You are very kind, Miss Mush,” he said. “But we are all quite busy at the moment. Perhaps another—”

“It’s best to eat it while it’s still warm,” said Miss Mush. “You probably don’t get fresh pies very often. Being a bachelor and all.”

“I really hate to disturb the class,” said Mr. Gorf. “I’ll tell you what. I’ll just come outside a moment, and you can hand it to me.”

He glared at the class, daring them to move. Then he opened the door.

“I hope you like pepper pie,” said Miss Mush. She smashed it in his face.

Mr. Gorf turned around. His face was covered with a thick pepper cream. He sneezed.

Calvin laughed.

“Hey, my voice is back!” said Calvin. “Wait a second. This isn’t my voice. I sound like Bebe!”

Mr. Gorf sneezed again.

“I can talk!” shouted Jenny. “But who am I?”

Mr. Gorf sneezed.

“You’re Maurecia!” said Jason. Jason sounded like the gentleman from Scotland.

Mr. Gorf kept sneezing.

“Who might I be, sonny?” Paul cackled. He sounded like somebody’s grandmother.

Todd barked.

“AAAACHOOOO!!!!!!”

Mr. Gorf sneezed so hard his nose flew off his face. He screamed like a donkey, then ran noseless out of the room.

“Oh, gross!” said Jason. “Now I sound like Allison.”

Bebe said something in Italian.

“Nobody panic,” said Miss Mush. “Your voices are bouncing around, trying to find where they belong. It might take a while, but soon you will be back to normal.”

“How do you know?” asked Leslie, although she sounded like Paul. “And how’d you know to smash a pepper pie in Mr. Gorf’s face?”

“I wasn’t exactly sure,” explained Miss Mush. “But when I came up the first time, I heard Kathy say ‘Have a nice day.’ So, either Kathy had decided to be nice to me, or Mr. Gorf was a mean teacher who sucked children’s voices up his nose.” She shrugged. “I just didn’t think Kathy would be nice.”

“Maybe if you learned to brush your teeth,” muttered Kathy.

Mr. Gorf’s nose lay on the floor. Miss Mush picked it up and put it in her apron pocket. “It will go good in spaghetti sauce,” she said.

Soon all the children had their real voices back. Rondi and Joe called their mothers on Mr. Gorf’s portable phone and told them they loved them.

While far away, in a small village in Scotland, a man who hadn’t spoken for twenty years turned to his wife and said, “Top of the morning to you, Tilly.”

13

The New Teacher

The new teacher entered the classroom carrying a big blue notebook stuffed with papers. She had white hair and wore glasses. She was a lot older than anyone else in the class.

She took a big breath. “My, it’s tiring walking up all those stairs, isn’t it?” she said.

Nobody said anything. They just stared at her.

She set her notebook on the teacher’s desk. “My name is Mrs. Drazil,” she said. “And I’m not from Brazil.” She smiled at her little joke.

Nobody else smiled. After Mrs. and Mr. Gorf, they didn’t trust teachers.

Drazil, thought Deedee. *Where have I heard that name before?*

“Where are you from?” asked Leslie.

“Actually, I was born not too far from here,” said Mrs. Drazil.

“Then why’d you say you came from Brazil?” asked Benjamin.

“No, I said I wasn’t from Brazil,” said Mrs. Drazil.

“Have you ever been to Brazil?” asked Eric Fly.

“No,” explained Mrs. Drazil. “It was just a little joke. Brazil rhymes with Drazil. I thought it might help you remember my name.”

Terrence laughed. “Drazil—Brazil!” he shouted. “That’s funny!”

Several other kids laughed too.

But not Deedee. She had heard of Mrs. Drazil somewhere. She was sure of it. And whatever she had heard, she was sure it wasn’t good.

“What’s a Brazil?” asked Eric Ovens.

“Brazil is the largest country in South America,” said Mrs. Drazil.

“Oh,” said Eric Ovens. “I thought it was one of those things that, you know, women wear, you know, on their bosom.”

Several kids laughed.

“No, that’s a brassiere,” said Mrs. Drazil.

There was more laughter.

Stephen was shocked. “She said ‘brassiere’!” he whispered. “Right in class!”

“I know, I heard her!” said Jason.

But Deedee still didn’t trust her, even if she did say “brassiere” right out loud.

There was a television show that Deedee liked to watch. It was about real criminals. At the end of the show, they always asked the viewers to call the police if they knew where any of the criminals were.

Deedee wondered if she had seen Mrs. Drazil on that show.

"Does anybody have any questions they'd like to ask me?" asked Mrs. Drazil.

Ron raised his hand.

Mrs. Drazil pointed to him.

"How old are you?" asked Ron.

Dana gasped. "You're not supposed to ask someone *that*!" she said.

"Especially someone as old as Mrs. Drazil!" said Mac.

Mrs. Drazil smiled. "I don't mind," she said. "I'm sixty-six years old. You can ask me anything you want."

"Anything?" asked Joy.

"I'm a teacher," said Mrs. Drazil. "That's what I'm here for."

Paul raised his hand. "How much do you weigh?" he asked.

"One hundred and twenty-four pounds," said Mrs. Drazil.

"How much money do you make?" asked Eric Bacon.

"I'm a substitute teacher," explained Mrs. Drazil. "So I only make money on days that I teach. Then I make fifty-one dollars and eighteen cents a day."

"What a rip-off!" said Jenny. "You should make at least two hundred!"

"That would be nice," said Mrs. Drazil. "But I'm a teacher because I love to teach. I love to see young children learn."

Joy raised her hand. "How many men have you kissed in your whole life?"

Mrs. Drazil thought a moment as she appeared to be counting on her fingers. "Thirty-one," she said.

Everyone gasped.

Deedee raised her hand.

Mrs. Drazil smiled at her. "Yes, the girl in the pretty flowered T-shirt."

"Have you ever been in jail?" asked Deedee.

"No," said Mrs. Drazil.

"Are the police after you?"

"No," said Mrs. Drazil.

Deedee still didn't trust her.

"Okay," said Mrs. Drazil. "Before we get started I want to say one more thing. I enjoy teaching so much that sometimes I get a little carried away. I talk too much. So if I start to get boring, will somebody please raise your hand and tell me."

“For real?” asked Todd. “You want us to tell you to stop talking?”

“And we won’t get in trouble?” asked Bebe.

“No, of course not,” said Mrs. Drazil. “You’ll be helping me and the rest of your class. You’re not going to learn anything if you’re bored.”

“Cool!” said Terrence.

“Oh, I suppose when I first started teaching, I used to be a little more strict,” said Mrs. Drazil. “I even worried about things like whether my students had clean fingernails or if their shirts were tucked in.” She laughed. “But times have changed. I’ve changed. Besides, the kids were a lot worse back then. At least *some* of them.”

For just a second her sweet face turned sour as she looked at her notebook on her desk.

Then she smiled again. “I believe teaching requires mutual cooperation. I will cooperate with you, and you need to cooperate with me. If we work together, we will have a very enjoyable learning experience.

Her face turned sour again. “But if you cross me, you will be very, very sorry.” She ran her fingers over her blue notebook. “Oh, maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but *someday I will get you*! You can run, but you can’t hide.”

She smiled. “Okay, let’s get started.”

14

A Light Bulb, a Pencil Sharpener, a Coffeepot, and a Sack of Potatoes

“Galileo was a great scientist,” said Mrs. Drazil. “He was born in Italy in 1564 and died in 1642. He was the first person to use a telescope to study the stars. And he also helped figure out the laws of gravity.”

“Oh, I know about gravity,” said Joe. “Mrs. Jewls pushed a computer out the window. It fell a lot faster than a pencil.”

“I don’t think so,” said Mrs. Drazil. “Galileo proved that all objects fall at the same speed. He conducted a very famous experiment. He dropped lots of different objects off the Leaning Tower of Pisa. The Leaning Tower of Pisa is in Italy. It was built in—”

Todd raised his hand. “You’re getting a little boring,” he said.

“Oh, my goodness, am I?” asked Mrs. Drazil.

Rondi, Leslie, Paul, and Calvin nodded their heads.

“I’m sorry,” said Mrs. Drazil. She thought a moment. “I know!” she exclaimed. “Let’s do the experiment here!”

The children cheered. They loved experiments.

Mrs. Drazil rubbed her hands together. “Let’s see. We’ll need a coffeepot, a pencil sharpener, a light bulb, and . . .” She thought a moment. “We need something heavy.”

“An elephant’s heavy,” said Benjamin.

“There are no elephants in Wayside School,” said Mrs. Drazil.

Everyone laughed.

“How about a sack of potatoes?” asked Ron. “I bet Miss Mush has one.”

“Go see,” said Mrs. Drazil.

“There’s a coffeepot down in the office,” said Stephen.

“Go get it,” said Mrs. Drazil.

“If I had a screwdriver, I could get the pencil sharpener off the wall,” said Eric Fly.

“I’ve got a screwdriver!” said Jenny.

“Can we use a fluorescent light bulb?” asked Bebe. She looked up at the ceiling.

“I guess so,” said Mrs. Drazil.

“How do I get it?” asked Bebe.

“You’re the scientist,” said Mrs. Drazil. “You figure it out.”

Bebe put her chair on top of her desk and stood on it. She still couldn’t reach the ceiling. “Hey, Benjamin, let me have your chair!”

She put Benjamin's chair on top of hers, but she still wasn't tall enough.

Calvin dumped the wastepaper basket onto the floor. "Try this," he said.

Bebe turned the trash can upside down and put it on top of Benjamin's chair. Then she climbed on top, but she still couldn't quite reach.

Leslie brought the class dictionary. Jenny and Dana donated their math books. Sharie grabbed Mrs. Drazil's old blue notebook.

"Put that down!" yelled Mrs. Drazil. "Right now!"

Sharie dropped the notebook. Mrs. Drazil's kindly old face had suddenly turned mean.

"Don't ever touch that again!" Mrs. Drazil ordered.

Sharie returned, trembling, to her seat.

Everyone was staring at Mrs. Drazil. She smiled sweetly. "Go back to what you were doing," she said.

Jason threw Bebe his lunch box. She set it on top of the books, then climbed on top. Standing on her tiptoes, she was able to pull the cover off the fluorescent light. She grabbed the light just as the pile collapsed beneath her.

She fell to the ground, triumphantly holding the unbroken light bulb high above her head.

Ron returned with a sack of potatoes from Miss Mush.

Stephen returned with Mr. Kidswatter's coffeepot.

Eric Fly unscrewed the pencil sharpener from the wall.

Mrs. Drazil wrote "Coffeepot," "Sack of Potatoes," "Pencil Sharpener," and "Light Bulb" on the blackboard.

"We're going to drop all four objects out the window at the same time," she said. "How many people think the coffeepot will hit the ground first?"

"Is there coffee in it?" asked John.

"It's about half full," Stephen reported.

Eight kids thought the coffeepot would hit the ground first. Sixteen thought the sack of potatoes would hit the ground first. Three thought the light bulb would be first. Only Terrence thought the pencil sharpener would hit first.

Jason, Jenny, Joe, John, and Joy were the judges. Mrs. Drazil sent them outside.

Stephen held the coffeepot out one window.

Bebe held the light bulb out another.

Eric Fry held the pencil sharpener out another.

And Ron held out the sack of potatoes.

Everyone else crowded around to watch. With everyone on the same side of the classroom, the school leaned a little bit, just like the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

"On your mark. . . . Get set. . . . Let go!" said Mrs. Drazil.

The objects fell through the air and smashed against the pavement.

A short while later, the judges returned. Their clothes were splattered with coffee. Jenny had bits of potatoes in her hair.

"Was the pencil sharpener first?" asked Terrence.

"It happened so fast," said Joe. "They all hit about the same time."

"But the coffeepot made the coolest explosion," said Jason.

"I think the light bulb hit the ground last," said John.

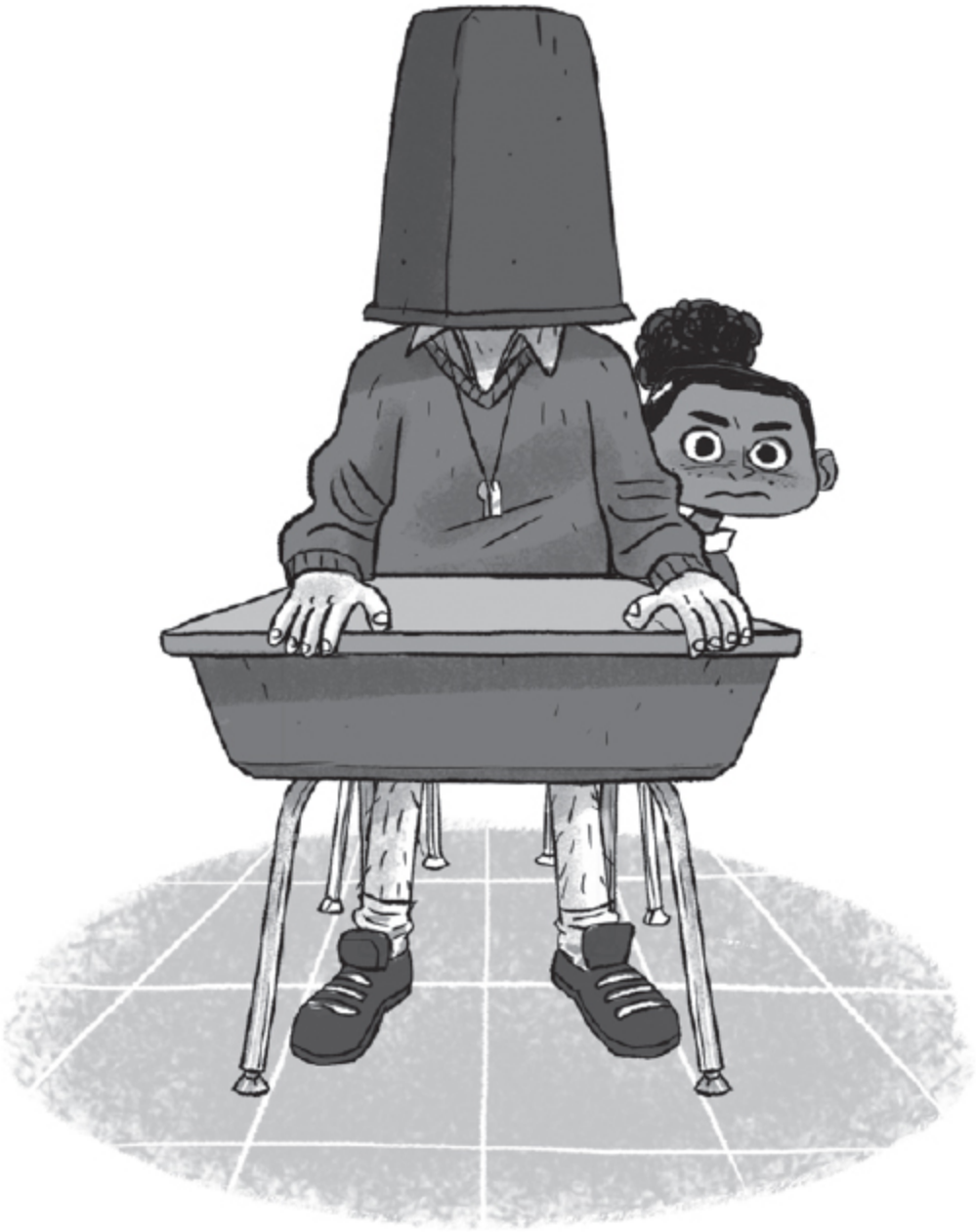
"Well, that's possible," said Mrs. Drazil. "Gravity causes all objects to fall at the same rate. But air slows them down. That's called air resistance. And that's good. Otherwise raindrops would kill us. Air resistance slows all things down a little bit, but it has a greater effect on very light objects, such as a piece of paper. And of course the shape of the paper is important too. A crumpled-up piece of paper will fall faster than—"

"You're getting boring again," said Mac.

Mrs. Drazil stopped talking.

"Now we need a new pencil sharpener," said Leslie.

Paul licked her ear.



15

An Elephant In Wayside School

The bell rang for recess, and the children exploded out of the building.

Louis, the yard teacher, was ready with a big pile of red and green balls.

The kids called, “Hi, Louis!” and “Over here, Louis!” as he tossed the balls to them: over his shoulder, behind his back, through his legs.

Deedee came charging out of the building. Usually by the time she got to the playground, there were no good balls left, but she could see one red ball by Louis’s foot.

She knocked over a kid from the tenth floor and shouted, “Hey, Lou—”

Suddenly she stopped.

She had just remembered where she’d heard of Mrs. Drazil.

It was from Louis! He had once told her about the meanest teacher he’d ever had when he was a kid.

She hurried over to her friends to make sure. “Hey, Todd!” she called.

Todd was playing tetherball with Ron. As he turned to look at Deedee, the ball came around and bonked him on the head.

“Do you remember when Louis told us about the meanest teacher he ever had?” asked Deedee.

Todd shook his head. After being conked by the tetherball, he couldn’t remember anything.

“I remember,” said Jason, who was in line to play. “Whenever Louis got in trouble, the teacher used to put the wastepaper basket on his head!”

“That’s right!” said Jenny. “And then Louis would have to keep it there the rest of the day. And everyone would laugh at him. And then the teacher would call on him to answer questions from the blackboard, but he couldn’t see the questions, so she’d give him an F!”

“Do you remember the teacher’s name?” asked Deedee.

Her friends shook their heads. Todd couldn’t even remember his own name.

“I think it was Mrs. Drazil,” said Deedee.

They ran to Louis.

“Hey, Louis!” said Jason. “What was the name of that mean teacher you once had when you were a kid?”

“Which one?” asked Louis.

“The one that put the trash can on your head,” said Jenny.

Louis shuddered just thinking about her. “Mrs. Drazil,” he whispered.

The kids looked at each other.

“What color hair did she have?” asked Jason.

“Brown,” said Louis. “Why?”

“We have a substitute teacher,” explained Deedee. “She’s real nice.”

“Good,” said Louis.

“Her name is Mrs. Drazil,” said Deedee.

“Whoa, I’m getting out of here,” said Louis. He started to run, but the kids grabbed him.

“It’s okay,” said Jenny. “It can’t be the same teacher. *Our* teacher is nice.”

“And her hair isn’t brown,” said Jason. “It’s white.”

Louis relaxed a little bit.

“You want to come up and meet her?” asked Deedee.

“No way!” said Louis.

“Oh, you’re so silly, Louis,” said Deedee. “She’s not the same teacher. And besides, you’re a teacher now too.”

“Oh, yeah, I forgot,” said Louis.

“C’mon, Louis,” said Deedee. She held his hand and led him up the stairs.

They entered the classroom.

Mrs. Drazil was putting some of the children’s work on the bulletin board.

“Mrs. Drazil,” said Deedee. “We brought our yard teacher up to meet you.”

“It’s very nice to meet you,” said Mrs. Drazil as she pinned up Joe’s arithmetic test. “Exercise is so important for young minds and bodies.” She turned around.

Louis’s face paled. “Well, it was nice to meet you,” he said very quickly. “I’ve gotta go. Bye!”

“Stay right where you are, Louis!” ordered Mrs. Drazil.

He froze.

Mrs. Drazil slowly walked to her desk. She picked up the old blue notebook.

“*The notebook!*” whispered Louis.

Mrs. Drazil opened it and flipped through the pages. “Here we are,” she said. She removed a piece of paper and handed it to Louis. “Is this your homework?” she asked.

Louis looked at it.

“You were supposed to copy it over, weren’t you?” asked Mrs. Drazil.

“That was over fifteen years ago,” said Louis.

“I don’t remember.”

“I do,” said Mrs. Drazil.

“Oh, now I remember!” said Louis. “I was going to copy it over. But then my pencil point broke, so I went to sharpen it, but the pencil sharpener fell on my foot, so I had to go to the hosp—”

“I don’t want any of your famous excuses, Louis,” said Mrs. Drazil. “I just want the homework. You may share Deedee’s desk.”

Louis sat next to Deedee.

“And remember, Louis,” said Mrs. Drazil. “I know your tricks.”

Deedee watched Louis struggle with his homework. “Sorry, Louis,” she said.

“Don’t be sorry,” said Mrs. Drazil. “It’s for his own good. And I expect neatness, Louis, or else you’ll just have to do it again.”

He frowned.

Mrs. Drazil stood over him and watched him work. “Your fingernails are filthy,” she said.

“I’m the yard teacher,” Louis tried to explain. “I spend a lot of time outside, in the grass and dirt and stuff.”

“I don’t want excuses,” said Mrs. Drazil. “I want clean fingernails. And while you’re at it, shave off that mustache. It looks like a hairy caterpillar crawling across your face!”

“Not my mustache,” said Louis.

“Unless you want me to rip it off for you,” said Mrs. Drazil.

Deedee felt terrible. “I can’t believe Mrs. Drazil still remembers you after all this time,” she said.

“An elephant never forgets,” muttered Louis.

“I heard that,” said Mrs. Drazil. She put the wastepaper basket on Louis’s head.

16

Mr. Poop

Joy, Maurecia, and Jenny were playing jump rope out on the playground. School hadn’t started yet.

Maurecia and Jenny were twirling. Joy sang as she jumped:

“My mama wore pajamas to the grocery store.
She smashed a bunch of eggs on the grocery floor.
One dozen, two dozen, four dozen, six.
She dumped a bunch of jelly jars into the mix.
Grape jelly, apricot, don’t forget cherry.
Orange marmalade and wild strawberry.
A man walked by and fell in the glop.
He slid next door to the barber shop.
His icky-sticky body got covered in hair.
He tore a hole in his under—”

Joy tripped over the rope. It wasn’t her fault Maurecia had suddenly stopped twirling.

“Hey!” said Joy. “What’s the big idea?”

“Look!” said Maurecia.

A very handsome stranger was walking toward them.

The girls stared at him.

“Good morning, Maurecia,” said the stranger. “Jenny. Joy.”

“How do you know my name?” Maurecia asked nervously. She wasn’t supposed to talk to strangers.

“I’ve known you a long time,” said the stranger. “I see you almost every day.”

Maurecia was beginning to feel scared. She looked around for Louis, the yard teacher, but didn’t see him. “I can scream real loud,” she warned.

“Oh my gosh!” said Jenny, “It’s Louis!”

Maurecia looked at the stranger. He did sort of look like Louis.

Except his hair was combed. His shirt was tucked in. He was wearing a tie. And there was skin between his nose and mouth.

He had shaved off his mustache.

“That’s Mr. Louis to you,” said Louis. “I’m a teacher, and I expect to be treated with respect.”

“You want to play jump rope, uh, Mr. Louis?” asked Maurecia.

Louis was great at jump rope. He could even do it blindfolded. He was the one who taught Joy the song she was singing at the beginning of this story.

“No, thank you, Maurecia,” said Louis. “I don’t play games. I’m an adult.”

“But you’re a yard teacher,” said Jenny.

“No, I’m a Professional Playground Supervisor,” Louis corrected her. He walked away.

“Wow!” whispered Maurecia. “I never knew Louis was so handsome!”

Jenny patted her heart. “I think I’m in love,” she said.

“I thought he looked kind of goofy,” said Joy.

Up in class, everyone was talking about the new Louis.

“He looks so weird without his mustache,” said Calvin.

“He’s handsome!” said Bebe.

“He got mad at me for running across the blacktop,” complained John. “He made me go all the way back to the edge of the blacktop, then walk across it And I had to call him Mr. Louis.”

“I am very proud of Louis,” said Mrs. Drazil. “He has always been a troublemaker. But I think he is trying to be good. We should all give him a chance.”

Joy stared at Mrs. Drazil. *It’s your fault,* she thought. *You made him shave off his mustache.*

At recess, Louis refused to pass out the balls.

“I haven’t washed them yet,” he said.

“You’re going to wash the balls?” asked Eric Bacon.

“They’re filthy,” said Louis. “And they all have the wrong amount of air in them.”

“I don’t care,” said Eric Fry.

“I do,” said Louis. “Before I can let you play with them, I have to clean them and pump them up with the precise amount of air as specified by POOPS.”

“POOPS?” asked Eric Ovens.

“The Professional Organization Of Playground Supervisors,” explained Louis.

He showed them the POOPS handbook.

“Well, what are we supposed to do?” asked Eric Fry.

“Just play and have fun,” said Louis. “But remember, stay off the grass. No running on the blacktop. No eating. And no excessive shouting.”

The three Erics walked away. “What a booger brain!” muttered Eric Bacon.

Louis heard him.

“That’s Mr. Booger Brain to you, young man,” he said.

The next day, when the kids tried to go outside for recess, they only made it down to the fourth floor. The stairs were completely jammed with other kids from lower classrooms.

“Hey, what’s going on?” shouted Joy.

“Louis won’t let anyone outside,” somebody shouted back. “He’s painting the blacktop!”

“But I have to go to the bathroom!” yelled Stephen.

“Now he’s gone too far!” said Joy. “Excuse me, out of my way, sorry, coming through!” she said as she squeezed in and out of kids, crawled through legs, climbed over heads, until she made her way to the door at the bottom of the stairs.

Louis was slopping black paint across the blacktop. Joy could see him through the glass door. Next to him was a big bucket of paint.

“MR. LOUIS!” she shouted so loud that even the kids back up on the fourth floor had to put their hands over their ears.

He came to the door.

“What are you doing?” Joy demanded.

“The blacktop isn’t black,” explained Louis. “It’s gray. A blacktop is supposed to be black. It’s right here on page forty-three of the POOPS handbook.”

He opened the book and showed page forty- three to Joy.

Joy grabbed the book and threw it out across the graytop. It landed *plop* in the bucket of black paint.

All the kids behind her cheered.

“You’re the Poop!” said Joy.

Louis’s red face turned even redder. The place where his mustache used to be turned purple.

“That’s Mr. Poop to you,” he said.

17

Why the Children Decided They Had to Get Rid of Mrs. Drazil

1. SHE WAS NICE.

"I made cookies for everyone this morning," Mrs. Drazil announced.

Everyone cheered.

2. SHE THOUGHT UP WAYS TO MAKE LEARNING INTERESTING.

"I made five dozen cookies," she said. "There are twelve cookies in a dozen. So who can tell me how many cookies I made?"

Joe waved his arm back and forth. "I know! I know!" he said.

"Okay, Joe," said Mrs. Drazil. "How many cookies did I make?"

"Five dozen," Joe said proudly.

3. SHE WAS PATIENT.

"Yes, I made five dozen cookies," said Mrs. Drazil. "I told you that. But how many cookies are there?"

"Five dozen," said Joe.

"But how many cookies are in five dozen?" asked Mrs. Drazil.

"Huh?" asked Joe.

"How much is twelve times five?" asked Mrs. Drazil.

"Uh, just a second," said Joe. "Can I use pencil and paper?"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Drazil.

Joe took out a piece of paper and a pencil. He wrote the number five on the piece of paper, then tore it into twelve pieces. "Sixty!" he said.

Nobody quite understood Joe's mathematical methods.

4. SHE WAS FAIR.

"Yes, there are sixty cookies," she said. "And there are twenty-eight children in the class. So, how many cookies should each child get?"

Bebe raised her hand. "A hundred," she said.

"You can't have a hundred cookies," said Mrs. Drazil. "I only made sixty."

"Make some more," said Bebe.

"I made sixty," said Mrs. Drazil. "I'm not making any more."

"Okay," Bebe said with a sigh. "I'll take sixty."

"We have to divide them evenly," said Mrs. Drazil. "How many cookies should each child get so that every child gets the same amount?"

John raised his hand. "Everyone can have two cookies," he said, "and there will be four left over."

"Can I have them?" asked Bebe.

Allison raised her hand. “Everyone can have exactly two and one-seventh cookies,” she said.

“Very good, Allison,” said Mrs. Drazil. “And John, you were right too.” She gave everyone exactly two and one-seventh cookies.

5. SHE WAS A GOOD COOK.

“Best cookies I ever had in my whole life!” said Stephen.

Everyone agreed.

“I got the recipe from Miss Mush,” said Mrs. Drazil.

“You did?” several kids said together.

“I just added a pinch of this and a little of that,” said Mrs. Drazil.

6. SHE KNEW WHAT A GOOZACK WAS.

“Jason, would you please open the door?” she said.

Everyone gasped.

“What’s the matter?” she asked.

“You said the D-word!” said Dana.

“Door?” asked Mrs. Drazil.

Everyone gasped again.

“You’re supposed to call it a goozack,” explained Dana.

“Who said so?” asked Mrs. Drazil.

“Mr. Kidswatter,” said Dana.

“Mr. Kidswatter is a goozack,” said Mrs. Drazil.

Yes, Mrs. Drazil was smart. She was nice. She made learning interesting. She was patient and fair. And she even could make Miss Mush’s cookies taste good.

But she made Louis shave off his mustache.

And so she had to go.

18

The Blue Notebook

They had a plan. It all depended on Sharie.

Everyone just hoped she wouldn't fall asleep first. Sharie often fell asleep in class.

C'mon, Sharie, thought Deedee. *You can do it.*

Sharie looked out the window. The sky was full of big, fluffy clouds. She yawned. The clouds looked like giant pillows.

Sharie imagined herself wrapped up in one of those clouds, soft and cozy. She pulled her blue-and-red overcoat snugly over her head.

Her eyes closed. Then they opened wide. “Whazzat?!” she shouted.

“Sharie?” said Mrs. Drazll.

“Look!” shouted Sharie, pointing out the window. “It’s a—Hurry!” Her long eyelashes stuck straight out.

Mrs. Drazil hurried to Sharie’s desk. “What is it?”

“A spaceship!” said Sharie. “From outer space!”

On the other side of the room, Deedee dropped her pencil. She bent down to pick it up, then stayed down.

Deedee was part of the plan too. She had a dangerous mission. She had volunteered for it. She felt it was her duty, since she was the one who had brought Louis up to meet Mrs. Drazil in the first place.

“You don’t have to do it,” Ron had told her. “Mrs. Drazil would have seen Louis sooner or later.”

“No, I’ll do it,” Deedee had bravely replied.

Now she crawled across the floor.

Mrs. Drazil looked out the window. “Where?” she asked.

“Wait, it went behind a cloud,” said Sharie.

“What did it look like?” asked Mrs. Drazil.

“Like a giant hamburger,” said Sharie. “But there was a zizzle stick hanging down from the bottom!”

Deedee crawled to the teacher’s desk. She reached up and quietly opened the top drawer. She removed the blue notebook.

Mrs. Drazil stared out the window. “What’s a zizzle stick?” she asked.

“I don’t know,” Sharie said very mysteriously. “They don’t have them here on earth.”

Deedee crawled safely back to her seat.

At recess everyone crowded around Deedee as she went through the blue notebook.

“Louis once put a frog in Mrs. Drazil’s shoe,” she said.

“Why wasn’t her shoe on her foot?” asked Jenny.

“It doesn’t say,” said Deedee. “There’s a whole list of bad things Louis did. And he made it sound like Mrs. Drazil picked on him for no reason!”

“No wonder she put a trash can on his head!” said Todd.

“What else did he do?” asked Eric Bacon, who was always looking for new ideas.

But Deedee had already turned the page. “There are other kids a lot worse than Louis,” she said, flipping through the pages.

“What are you looking for?” asked Ron.

“I don’t know yet,” said Deedee. “But I’ll know it when I see it.”

She saw it!

It was a note to Mrs. Drazil from a girl named Jane Smith. Deedee read it aloud.

Dear Lizard Face,

Guess what? I didn’t do my homework again! HA HA HA! And there’s nothing you can do about it because you’re too stupid and ugly! HA HA HA! My family is moving away tomorrow! And you don’t know where! HA HA HA! Rub a monkey’s tummy! By the time you get this letter, I’ll be gone. Rub a monkey’s tummy with your head!

Love and Kisses,
Jane Smith

Everyone was shocked.

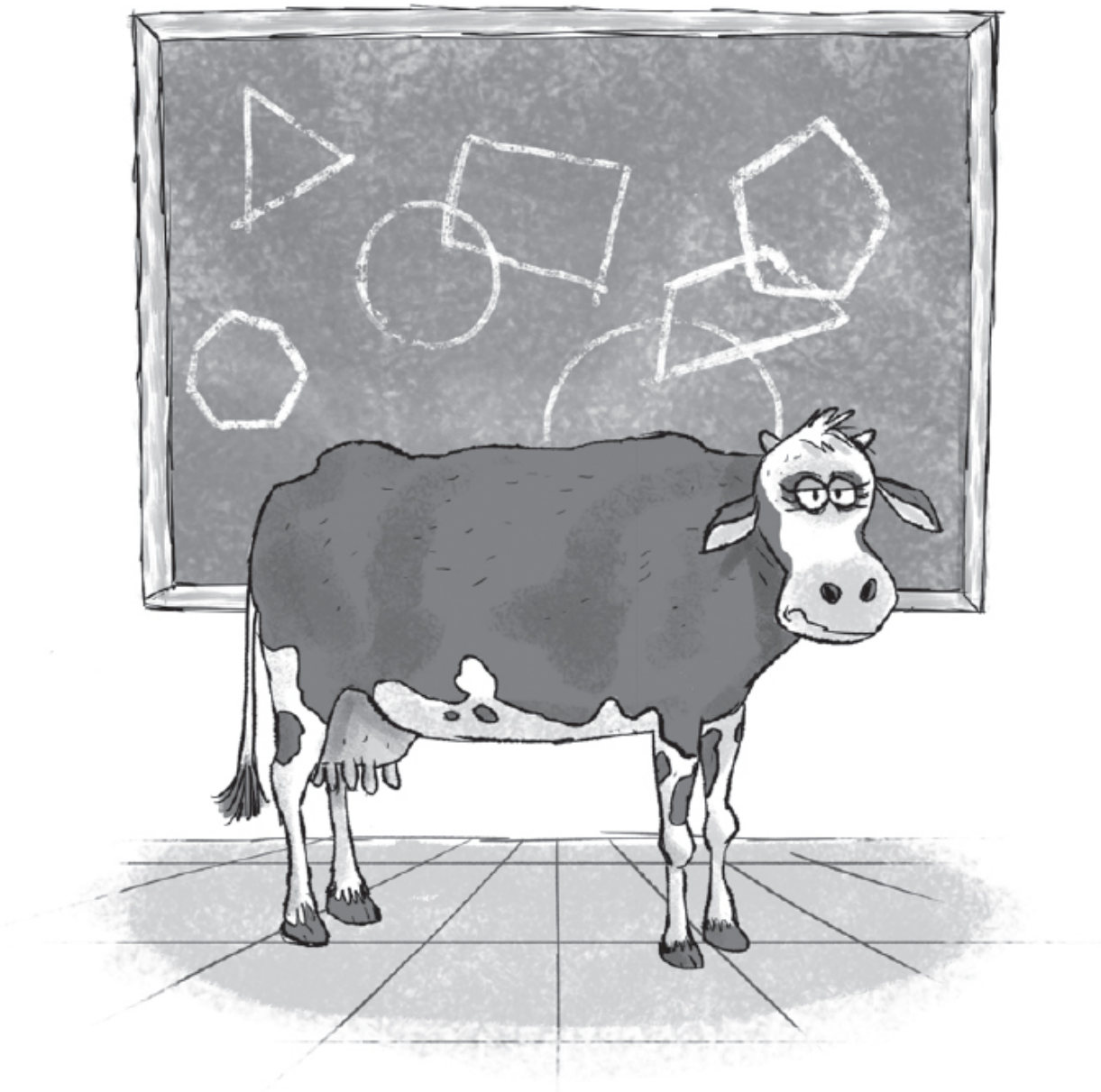
“How old is that letter?” asked Myron.

Deedee checked the date, then did the math in her head. “Jane Smith wrote it twenty-six years ago.”

“And look,” said Ron, reading over Deedee’s shoulder. “Jane didn’t do her last twelve homework assignments!”

After recess Sharie saw the UFO again, and Deedee returned the notebook to Mrs. Drazil’s desk.

Now all they had to do was find Jane Smith.



19

Time Out

Miss Zarves taught the class on the nineteenth story. There is no nineteenth story. And there is no Miss Zarves.

You already know all that.

But how do you explain the cow in her classroom?

Miss Zarves drew a triangle on the blackboard. “A triangle has three sides,” she said, then pointed to each side. “One, two, three.” She drew a square. “A square has four sides. One, two, three, four.”

She walked around the cow to the other side of the board. She drew a pentagon, a hexagon, and a perfect heptagon. “A heptagon has seven sides,” she said.

Miss Zarves was very good at drawing shapes. When most people try to draw heptagons, there is always one side that sticks out funny. But Miss Zarves’s heptagon was perfect. Every side was the same length, and every angle the same degree.

It was a great talent. But nobody appreciated her.

Nobody appreciated anything she did. It was like they didn’t know she was there.

She counted the sides on the heptagon. “One, two, three, fo—”

“MOOOOO,” said the cow.

Miss Zarves dropped her chalk. She glared at the cow. “I hate this!” she shouted.

It was a brown cow with a white head.

“It’s all right, Miss Zarves,” said Virginia, her best student. “I’ll get the chalk for you.”

“No,” said Miss Zarves. “Leave it where it is. The cow made me drop the chalk. The cow should pick it up.”

Her students gaped at her.

“I will not continue,” said Miss Zarves, “until that cow picks up the piece of chalk and draws an octagon on the board!” She folded her arms across her chest, stared at the cow, and waited.

Ray raised his hand.

“Yes, Ray,” said Miss Zarves, arms still folded across her chest.

“Uh, cows can’t pick up chalk,” said Ray.

Miss Zarves sighed. “I know,” she said. “And I can’t teach with a cow in my classroom!”

No one had ever seen Miss Zarves so upset. She usually had a pleasant disposition.

“It’s okay, Miss Zarves,” said Virginia. “I don’t mind the cow.”

“You get used to it after a while,” said Ray.

“What cow?” asked Nick. “Oh, that one! I forgot it was there.”

Miss Zarves smiled. She knew her students were trying to make her feel better.

“Other classrooms have goldfish or hamsters,” said Virginia. “It’s really no different.”

“No,” said Miss Zarves. “I won’t have it! All my life I’ve tried to be accommodating. I’ve never been one to complain. And what has it gotten me? A cow!”

She shook her head. “When I was a little girl, my friends never did what *I* wanted to do,” she said. “I always had to do whatever *they* wanted to do.

“And my teacher never called on me in class. She always called on the kids who just shouted out without raising their hands, even though she said she wouldn’t. She’d say, ‘I won’t call on you if you don’t raise your hand,’ but then she always did anyway. But I was a good girl. I never shouted out.

“And she always did things alphabetically, so I was always last, if there was time for me at all.

“My parents were too busy for me. They were always dressing up and going out to fancy parties. I had to tuck myself in at night and wish myself sweet dreams.”

She took a tissue out of her sleeve and wiped a tear from her eye.

“Still, I always tried to keep a smile on my face. Well, not anymore! The days of walk-all-over-Miss-Zarves are finished!”

She threw open her classroom door. “The squeaky wheel gets the grease!”

“What are you going to do?” asked Virginia.

“I’m going out there!” said Miss Zarves. “And I’m not coming back until I get some grease!”

She stepped outside. She decided she’d go right to the top! So she headed down the stairs—to the principal’s office.

Joy and Maurecia were coming up the stairs.

“Todd is uglier than stupid,” said Maurecia.

“You’re crazy!” said Joy. “He’s stupider than ugly.”

“Oooh,” teased Maurecia. “I’m going to tell Todd you think he’s cute.”

Miss Zarves stepped in front of them. “What are you children doing out of class?” she asked.

“I didn’t say he was cute,” said Joy. “He’s just not as ugly as he is stupid.”

“That means you think he’s handsome,” said Maurecia. “Are you going to *marry* him?”

“I asked you a question,” said Miss Zarves.

“Ugh, gross!” said Joy.

“I’m a teacher,” said Miss Zarves. “That means you are supposed to listen to me.”

Joy and Maurecia walked right past her.

Miss Zarves sighed, then continued down to Mr. Kidswatter’s office. She took a deep breath to steady her nerves. She was about to knock but then changed her mind and just marched right in. “Hey, Kidswatter, I want to talk to you!”

The principal was making a rubber-band ball.

“Do you hear me?” asked Miss Zarves.

He opened his desk drawer and looked for some more rubber bands.

“If you don’t answer me right now,” said Miss Zarves, “I’m walking out the door and never coming back!”

Mr. K pressed the buzzer on his phone. “Miss Night, you need to order more rubber bands.”

“That’s it!” said Miss Zarves. “I’m leaving. Good-bye. I quit!”

She walked out of the school and took a deep breath of fresh air.

“Please don’t go, Miss Zarves,” said a voice behind her.

Startled, she turned around.

“We need you,” said a bald-headed man. He was standing between two other men. Both had black mustaches, and one carried a black attaché case. The bald man didn’t have a mustache.

“Can you see me?” she asked.

“Yes, of course,” said the bald man. “And we appreciate all your hard work.”

“You do?”

All three nodded very sincerely.

Miss Zarves was touched. “I’ve been teaching for thirty years,” she said. “And nobody has ever said that before.”

“Well, it’s not easy being a teacher,” said the bald man.

“I don’t get any respect,” said Miss Zarves. “People treat me like I’m a nobody.”

“It’s not easy being a teacher,” said the man with the attaché case. “You have to work long hours for very little money.”

“I’ve never gotten paid,” said Miss Zarves. “And this is the first time in thirty years I’ve ever left the building.”

“It’s not easy being a teacher,” agreed the other man with a mustache.

“Even the book I’m reading to my class,” said Miss Zarves. “The author makes fun of teachers!”

“It’s a tragedy,” said the bald man.

“Then why do it?” asked Miss Zarves. “Why teach anymore? I could quit and nobody would care.”

“The children need you,” all three men said together.

Miss Zarves sighed. “I like to teach,” she said. “I really do. I love the children. It’s just—”

She stopped and wiped her eyes.

The man with the attaché case opened it. He took out a handkerchief and handed it to Miss Zarves.

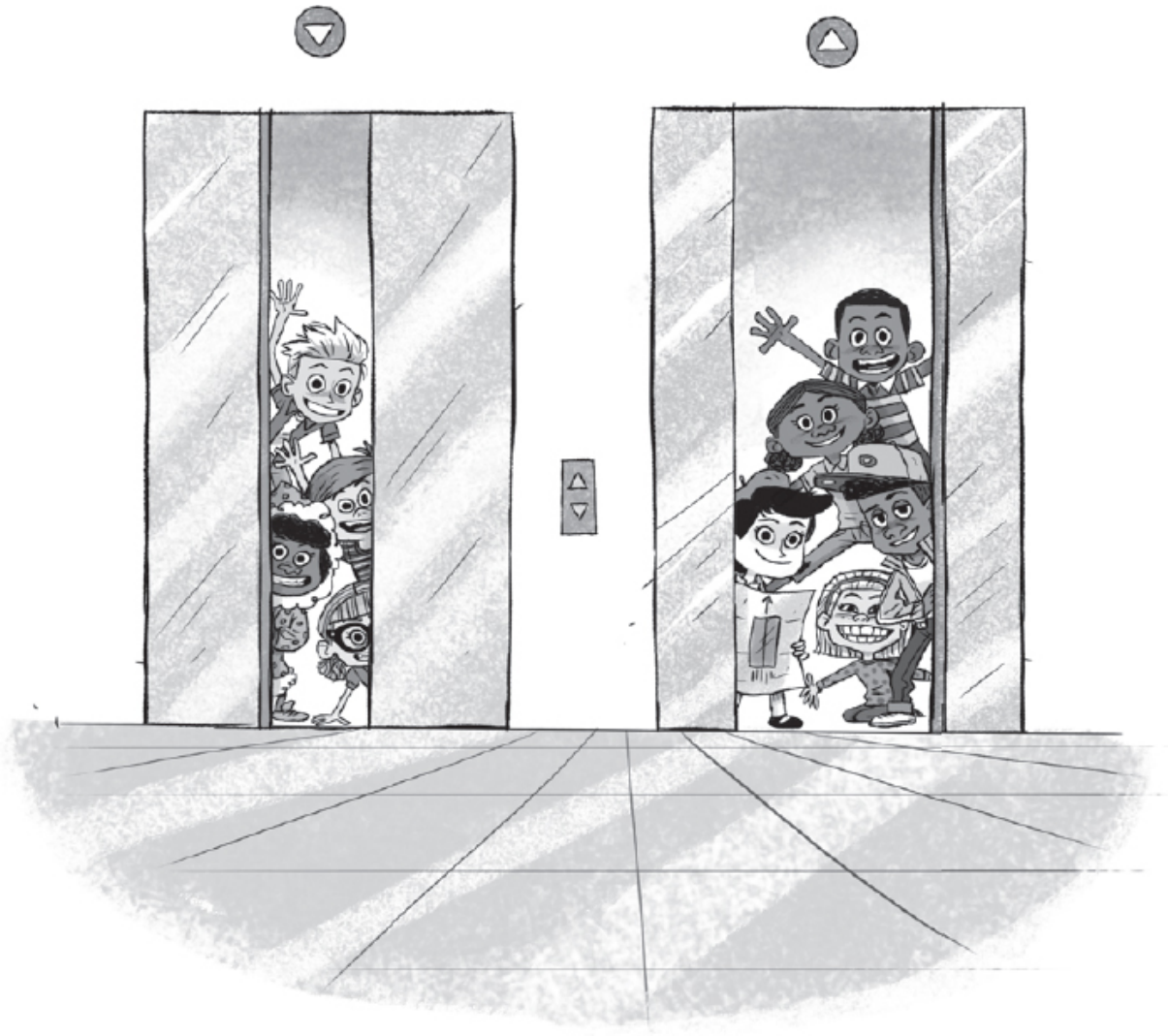
“Thank you,” she said, blew her nose, then gave it back to him.

He placed it back in his attaché case.

“Can you at least get the cow out of my classroom?” she asked.

The bald man smiled. “I’ll see what I can do,” he said.

Miss Zarves smiled as she slowly shook her head. Then she turned and walked back into the building.



20

Elevators

Mr. Kidswatter's voice came over the loudspeaker. **"Good morning, boys and girls!"**

There was the usual pause.

“I have a very important announcement,” said Mr. K. **“Elevators have been installed in Wayside School!”**

For a second, the kids on the thirtieth floor were too stunned to speak. Then everyone went crazy!

“Yahooooo!” yelled Sharie.

“Hot diggity dog!” shouted Dameon.

Everyone was yelling and jumping.

“Zippity doo dah!” shouted Mrs. Drazil.

Cheers could be heard coming from every classroom in Wayside School. The higher the classroom, the louder the cheers.

“Now, before you all rush out and use the elevators,” said Mr. Kidswatter, **“I want to talk a little bit about elevator safety.**

“I don’t want the same kind of chaos that we have on the stairs every day. I don’t know how many times I have to tell you. When you go up the stairs, stay to the right. When you come down the stairs, stay to the left. But still, everyone keeps bumping into each other.

“Well, that won’t happen on the elevators. I have personally designed a special safety system.

“There are two elevators. One is blue. One is red. When you want to go up, you take the blue elevator. When you want to go down, you take the red elevator. It’s that simple. It can’t go wrong! The blue one only goes up. And the red one only goes down.

“By the way, has anyone seen my coffeepot?”

And so, at last Wayside School got elevators. A blue one and a red one. They each worked perfectly one time—and never could be used again.

21

Open Wide

The good news: Jason got to leave school early.

The bad news: He had a dentist appointment.

“I’ll never ever eat candy again,” he promised the Tooth God as he headed down the stairs. “And I’ll brush my teeth after every meal. I promise. Even if it’s just a snack. I’ll bring my toothbrush to school! Just please, *please* don’t let her find any cavities.”

“I’ve heard that song before,” answered a voice inside his head. “Every time you go to the dentist, it’s the same thing. But then, a week later, you’re eating candy and forgetting to brush your teeth.”

“This time I really, really mean it,” Jason promised.

“Too late,” said the voice.

An hour later Jason was lying on his back in the dentist chair.

“Open,” said the dentist.

His dentist was named Dr. Payne. She had long fingers and even longer fingernails.

Jason opened his big mouth. He had the second biggest mouth in his class.

“Wider,” said Dr. Payne.

Jason stretched his mouth until his cheeks hurt.

“That’s good,” said Dr. Payne. “Now just a little bit wider.”

The veins in Jason’s neck bulged out as he stretched his mouth even wider. His eyes watered. His throat was dry.

“Okay, just hold it like that,” said Dr. Payne. She turned on the sucking machine and put a tube in Jason’s mouth.

The machine made a gagging noise as it sucked out his last drop of moisture.

As Dr. Payne poked around at his teeth she said “Tsk, tsk” and “Oh, my!” several times.

“So how do you like school?” she asked.

“Aghaa,” said Jason.

“What grade are you in?”

“Aakhalak,” said Jason.

“Well, just remember,” said Dr. Payne. “It’s very important to always listen to your teachers and do whatever they say.”

She poked a tooth with a long, pointed dentist tool.

“AAAAHhhhhhhhh!” Jason screamed in agony.

“Did that hurt?” asked Dr. Payne.

Jason shook his head. If he told her it hurt, she might think it was a cavity. If she couldn't find it herself, he certainly wasn't going to tell her about it.

"Are you sure?" asked Dr. Payne. She poked the same spot.

This time Jason didn't make a sound. Tears and sweat dripped down his face.

The receptionist came into the room.

"Yes?" said Dr. Payne.

Jason was glad for the break.

"Kendall's mother is on the phone," said the receptionist "She refuses to pay her bill."

"What?!" exclaimed Dr. Payne. "How dare—"

"She says you pulled the wrong tooth."

"Give me the phone!" shouted Dr. Payne.

The receptionist handed it to her.

"This is Dr. Payne. What do you mean you're not paying your bill? . . . Well, then, just bring Kendall back in here, and I'll pull that one too. I'll pull them all! But you still have to pay me.

"Your lawyer! I don't care what your lawyer said. You can tell your lawyer to rub a monkey's tummy! . . . You heard me! Rub a monkey's tummy with your head!"

She slammed down the phone.

Jason looked at the diploma hanging on the wall. Before his dentist got married, her name was Jane Smith.

His big mouth opened wider.

22

Jane Smith

“I found Jane Smith,” Jason told Stephen the next morning when he got to school.

“You better tell Deedee,” said Stephen.

They hurried across the playground.

A whistle blew. “No running!” ordered Mr. Louis, the Professional Playground Supervisor. “Now I want both of you to go back to the edge of the blacktop, and *walk* this time.”

The boys went back the way they came, then came back the way they went.

Deedee was sitting on a bench. She had been benched by Mr. Louis for excessive noisemaking.

"I found Jane Smith," Jason whispered as he walked past her. . . .

. . . Deedee and Jason entered the classroom together. Mrs. Drazil was seated behind her desk. As they passed in front of her, Deedee stopped and said, "Did you have a nice time at the dentist yesterday, Jason?"

"Yes, Deedee," said Jason. "It was very nice."

"I wonder if we have the same dentist," said Deedee. "What is your dentist's name?"

"Her name is Dr. Payne," said Jason. "But that hasn't always been her name."

"It hasn't?" asked Deedee.

"Oh, no," said Jason. "Before she was married, her name was Jane Smith."

"Jane Smith?" asked Deedee. "Is that spelled J-A-N-E S-M-I-T-H?"

"Yes, that's how you spell Jane Smith," said Jason. "But like I said, that's not her name anymore. Her name is Dr. Payne. She works at the dentist office at 124 Garden Street."

They took their seats. . . .

. . . Late that afternoon Dr. Payne finished work and walked out of her office. It had been a good day. She had drilled twenty-five teeth.

She made sixty dollars for every tooth she drilled. Twenty-five times sixty dollars is $1,500. Not bad for a day's work.

Of course, not all the teeth really had cavities, but how would any of her patients find out?

She got into her fancy silver-and-black sports car and drove away. She sang along with the radio.

She didn't even notice the old beat-up green station wagon in her rearview mirror.

She lived in a mansion next to the lake. There was a stone wall around the house. She pressed a button in her car, and an iron gate opened. The gate closed behind her as she headed up the long and winding driveway.

A moment later the old green station wagon stopped and parked next to the gate. A woman got out, walked around to the back, and opened the tailgate. She pulled out a ladder. She set the ladder up against the wall.

Under her arm she carried an old blue notebook. . . .

. . . Dr. Payne's butler handed her a drink. The cook was making dinner.

Dr. Payne's dog, cat, and husband were waiting for her in the den. Her dog's name was Brussels, and her cat's name was Sprouts. She petted them both.

Her husband's name was Sham. She petted him too.

"Hi, darling, how was your day?" he asked.

"I made fifteen hundred dollars," said Jane.

They hugged and kissed. They loved each other, but they loved money even more.

Then they had dinner by candlelight as they watched the sun set over the lake. After dinner they sat out on the deck, under the stars.

Sprouts lay purring on Jane's lap. Brussels sat faithfully by her side.

Life was perfect.

"I love you, darling," she said, petting Sprouts.

"And I love you," said Sham.

"I was talking to the cat," said Jane.

The butler stepped out onto the deck. "Excuse me, madam," he said, "but there's an elderly woman out in the yard."

Jane's long fingernails dug into her cat's neck.

"I wonder how she got past the gate," said Sham.

"I don't know, sir," said the butler. "She's probably hungry. Perhaps I can give her some leftover—"

"No!" shouted Jane. "Get rid of her!"

"Let me have a look," said Sham. He followed the butler back into the house.

He returned a moment later. "Darling, you'll never guess who's here. One of your former teachers! Isn't that just the sweetest—"

Jane screamed. She jumped to her feet. Sprouts flew off her lap and into the hot tub.

"What's wrong?" asked Sham.

"You idiot!" shouted Jane. "I told you to get rid of her!" She kicked her dog out of the way, then climbed over the railing and jumped off the deck to the ground, fifteen feet below.

Mrs. Drazil came out onto the deck. "You can't get away from me, young lady!" she hollered.

Jane hurt her ankle pretty badly when she hit the ground. It was either sprained or broken. She lay on the ground in agony as she looked up at her former teacher.

“You have homework to do,” said Mrs. Drazil, looking down at her.

Jane’s face twisted with pain. “Rub a monkey’s tummy!” she shouted, then struggled to her feet.

She had a suitcase stashed in the boathouse, just in case this ever happened. She hobbled to it, grabbed it, then limped down to the lake, dragging her suitcase behind her.

Mrs. Drazil hurried down the steps on the side of the deck.

Jane groaned as she threw her suitcase into a motorboat. Then she pulled herself aboard and started the engine.

“Darling, come back!” Sham shouted from the deck as he watched the boat sputter across the water.

Mrs. Drazil climbed into an old rowboat. “I’ll find you, Jane Smith!” she shouted into the darkness. “You can run, but you can’t hide!”

Jane’s voice echoed back across the black water. “Rub a monkeeee’s . . . tumm-mmy . . . with . . . yourrr . . . heaaaaaaaaa . . .”

And neither of them was ever seen again.

23

Ears

Wendy had three. Ears, I mean.

She had one ear on each side other head, just like most people. But she also had a third ear, which lay flat on top of her head.

You couldn't see it. It was completely covered by her thick, frizzy brown hair.

She was an intelligent and lovely young woman. She was gentle and kind.

At least, she used to be. Then she met Xavier and became evil and wicked, but I'll get to that later.

She lived in a small apartment in the big city. She always kept fresh flowers in the vase on her kitchen table.

She didn't have any friends. She was afraid someone might find out about her ear. She was very embarrassed by it.

The one on top of her head, I mean. The other two ears were pretty, as ears go.

Actually, the third ear wasn't ugly. In fact, it looked just like her other two.

It was quantity, not quality, that bothered her.

Then she met Xavier.

It was at a museum. They happened to be standing next to each other looking at the same painting. The *Mona Lisa.*

A guard stood by to make sure they didn't touch it.

Xavier was very handsome. But he was frightfully shy. He was afraid of women.

"That's a beautiful painting, isn't it?" said Wendy.

Xavier blushed. He wanted to speak, but his mouth locked shut with fear. It took all his courage just to nod his head.

But Wendy knew he liked her.

Because there was something else about her ear I haven't told you yet. The one on top of her head, I mean.

It didn't hear normal sounds. It heard people's brains.

Wendy was able to listen to Xavier's secret thoughts. And this is what she heard.

Yes, the painting is very beautiful. But you are more beautiful than the Mona Lisa. *I wish somebody would paint your picture. I would buy it and look at it all day. Alas, if only I had the courage to talk to you.*

Wendy didn't usually listen to other people's thoughts. She thought it was rude, even though the other people didn't know she was listening.

Besides, most people's thoughts were usually boring.

Xavier was getting too nervous standing next to her. He moved on to another painting.

Wendy followed him.

She listened to the lonely man's thoughts. They weren't boring at all. Most of his thoughts were about her, but she also learned a few other things. He liked to read. His favorite author was Charles Dickens. He loved animals, especially dogs.

"That painting reminds me of a book," said Wendy. "A *Tale of Two Cities*, by Charles Dickens. Have you read it?"

"Yes!" Xavier blurted, a little too loudly. "It's my favorite book! I've read everything Dickens has written. Twice. My favorite part is when—"

He suddenly stopped, very embarrassed.

"Please go on," said Wendy.

"No, I don't want to bother you," said Xavier.

"You're not bothering me," said Wendy. "Charles Dickens is my favorite author. I sometimes read aloud to my dog."

"You have a dog?" asked Xavier.

Wendy nodded.

Xavier stared into her dark eyes. "I love dogs," he said, as his brain said, *I love you.*

Wendy and Xavier spent the afternoon together. He could hardly stop talking.

It was like a genie had escaped from a bottle. All the love and emotion that had been buried for so long inside him came pouring out on Wendy.

"I don't even know your name," he suddenly blurted.

"Wendy Nogard," said Wendy.

"I'm Xavier Dalton," said Xavier.

They shook hands and made plans to meet again at the museum the following week.

On her way home, Wendy stopped by the library and checked out *A Tale of Two Cities*. Then she went to the pet store and bought a dog.

A month later Xavier asked her to marry him.

Wendy didn't know what to say. She loved Xavier. And she knew he loved her. But she still hadn't told him about her ear.

The one on top of her head, I mean.

He knew about the other two. He had nibbled on each of them.

“Marriage is a big step,” she said. “I’m afraid we haven’t known each other long enough.”

“I’ve known you long enough to know I could never be happy without you,” said Xavier. “Before I met you, Wendy, I was sad and lonely. But I was used to it. Now I can’t imagine living like that again. I don’t know what I’d do without you.”

He stroked her hair.

“Well, there’s one little thing you don’t know about me,” said Wendy.

His hand bumped into it. “What’s this thing?” he asked.

“That’s what I was going to tell you about, dear,” said Wendy.

Xavier parted Wendy’s hair and looked at it. “It’s an ear!” he exclaimed.

“Yes, it is,” said Wendy. “Some people have two ears. I have three. Now that you know, if you still want to marry me, my answer is yes! Yes, sweetheart, yes!”

“I love you,” said Xavier. “That’s all that matters to me.”

That was what he said. But this is what he was thinking.

Oh, gross! You’re disgusting! I never want to touch you again! I can’t even stand to look at you! You tricked me, you freak! You monster!

And of course Wendy heard every word.

He stood up. “I’ll be right back, sweetheart. I bought you diamond earrings as an engagement present. I just need to run back to the jewelry store and buy one more.” He hurried out the door.

She never saw him again.

I’m sorry to say this story has a sad ending.

Xavier, thanks to Wendy, got over his shyness. He went out with lots of women but broke each one’s heart. He could never love any of them.

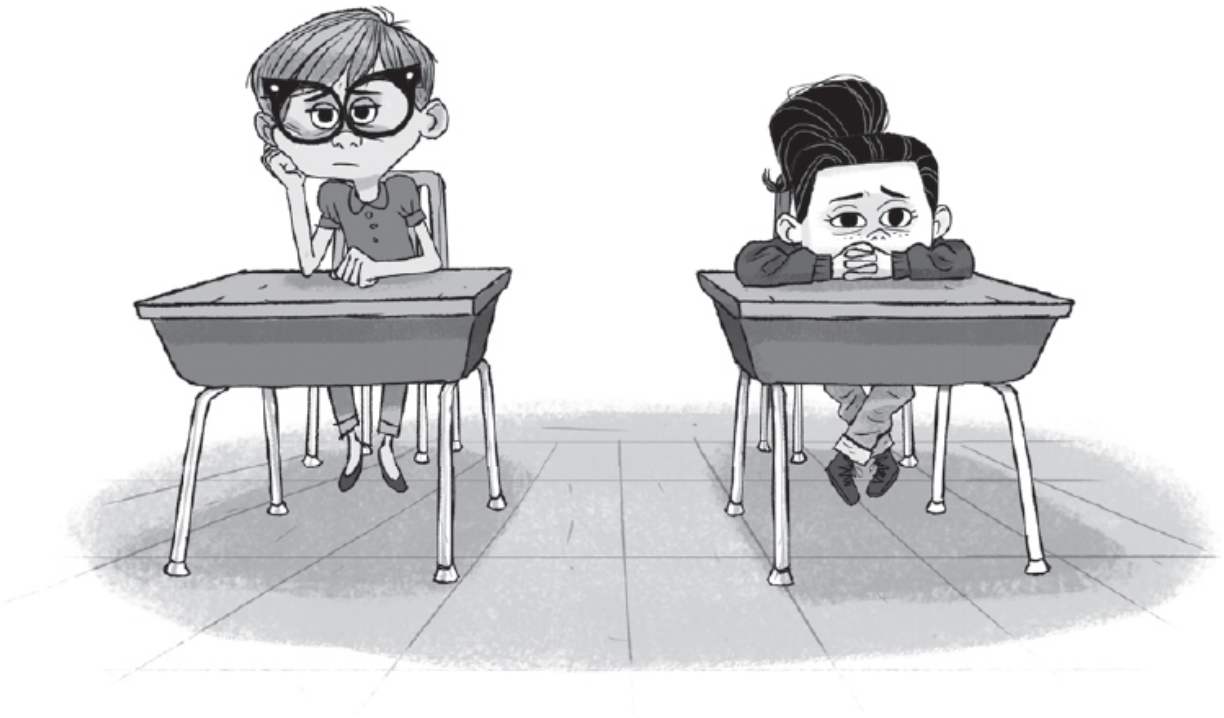
There was a hole in his heart. He was in love with Wendy Nogard, but he didn’t know it. And so he could never be happy.

Wendy became a bitter and evil person. She was unhappy, and she wanted everyone else to be unhappy too.

Whenever she heard someone thinking happy thoughts, she would listen closely and then do and say just the right thing to make the person feel rotten.

She hated children the most. Every time she passed a playground, she heard them laughing and having fun.

So she became a substitute teacher.



24

Glum and Blah

Miss Nogard entered the classroom on the thirtieth story. She looked at all the bright and chipper faces. She knew by the end of the day they would no longer be bright and chipper.

They would be glum and blah.

She smiled at the class. “Good morning, everybody,” she said. “My name is Miss Nogard.”

She listened to their brains.

Calvin had spilled orange juice on his lap during breakfast and worried that someone might think he had gone to the bathroom in his pants.

Dana had gotten her hair cut yesterday, and she thought it was too short. She was afraid it made her look like a boy. She was especially

sensitive to this because Dana was sometimes a boy's name.

Jason was mad at his older brother, Justin. Justin was in high school. Justin always got good grades and was a star in everything he did. Compared to Justin, Jason felt like a loser. "What's so great about high school?" he had asked this morning. "My school is higher than yours!"

D. J. had heard a song on the radio on his way to school. He hated the song! But it kept playing over and over again in his head.

Bebe had an itch on her leg.

Miss Nogard smiled. The bad stuff always rose to the top of the brain.

Even if a person was very excited about something wonderful, the person still worried about what could go wrong.

Jenny was going horseback riding after school, if it didn't rain. She had never gone horseback riding before. She hoped she wouldn't fall off the horse.

Miss Nogard clapped her hands. "So, who would like to tell me what you've been working on?" she asked.

A few hands went up in the air.

"Oooh! Oooh!" said Mac.

"How about the boy in the orange and purple shirt?" said Miss Nogard.

Everyone looked around.

"The handsome young man sitting right there," said Miss Nogard.

Dana looked at her shirt. It was orange and purple. She pointed at herself and mouthed the word *me*?

"Yes, you," said Miss Nogard.

Dana's face turned red-hot. "I'm a girl," she said.

Everyone laughed.

"Oh, I am so embarrassed!" said Miss Nogard, with her hand over her heart.

"It's not your fault," said Dana. "It's my stupid haircut. I hate it!"

"Oh, no," said Miss Nogard. "You look adorable. I see now you're a very pretty girl."

"I'm ugly," muttered Dana. She buried her head under her arms.

"I'd better call on someone else," said Miss Nogard.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, a brain screamed, *Don't call on me! Whatever you do, please don't call on me!*

It came from Benjamin Nushmutt.

"How about you?" said Miss Nogard, looking right at him.

Just don't ask me my name, thought Benjamin. *I never can say my name in front of people.* He took a breath to steady himself. "Well, we've been reading—"

"First tell me your name," Miss Nogard said sweetly.

The muscles in Benjamin's face tightened. He concentrated real hard, then said, "Benjamin Nushmutt."

"I beg your pardon?" said Miss Nogard.

"Benjamin Nushmutt," he repeated.

"Henderson Schmidt?" asked Miss Nogard.

Benjamin sighed. "Ben-ja-min Nush! Mutt!" he shouted.

"I'm sorry," said Miss Nogard. "I must have been distracted. What did you say?"

Benjamin pressed his lips together. He tried to speak, but his mouth wouldn't open.

"His name is Benjamin," said Jason. "Benjamin Nushmutt."

"Thank you," said Miss Nogard. "That's a very nice name, Benjamin. You shouldn't be ashamed of it."

Benjamin covered his red face with his hands.

She turned to Jason. "You look familiar. Do I know you?"

"I don't think so," said Jason.

She stared at him, as if she were trying to remember. "You're Justin, right?"

"I'm Jason. Justin's my older brother."

"So you're Justin's baby brother!" said Miss Nogard.

Everybody laughed.

"I remember Justin. I substituted for his class once. He was the brightest student I ever taught. You must feel very lucky to have such an exceptional brother."

His feet stink, thought Jason.

For the rest of the day, Miss Nogard kept accidentally-on-purpose calling Jason "Justin."

One by one, she made every child in the class feel miserable. She called Calvin to her desk and asked in a whisper if he had to use the restroom. Whenever she passed D.J., she hummed the song stuck in his head. Whenever Bebe finally stopped thinking about her itch, Miss Nogard would walk by and scratch her own leg.

“It looks like it might rain,” she said as she stared out the window at the bright blue sky.

Darn, I’ll never get to go horseback riding! thought Jenny.

“I have a nephew who went horseback riding on a day like this,” said Miss Nogard. “There wasn’t a cloud in the sky. Then suddenly, out of nowhere, it started thundering and lightning. It spooked the horse terribly.”

“What happened to your nephew?” asked Jenny.

“Oh, he’s fine,” said Miss Nogard. “He just broke both his arms and legs. He’ll be in a cast for a year. But he has a very positive attitude; that’s the important thing. Remember, always keep a positive attitude.”

By the end of the day, nobody had a positive attitude. The whole class was glum and blah.

The children walked out of the school building, heads down. Except Jenny, who looked up at the sky, worrying about the weather, although she didn’t know if she was more worried about rain or sunshine.

Even D. J. was frowning.

“What’s the matter?” asked Louis, the yard teacher.

“Nothing,” muttered D. J. “I guess I just had a bad day.”

“Don’t you like your new teacher?” asked Louis.

“She’s real nice,” said Dana. *It’s not her fault I’m the ugliest girl in the world!*

“I like her a lot,” said Jason. *It’s my brother I hate.*

“Me too,” said Benjamin. *I hate myself!*

Louis rubbed his upper lip. His mustache was beginning to grow back. “What’s her name?” he asked.

“Miss Nogard,” said Bebe as she scratched the back of her leg raw.

“Are you sure?” asked Louis.

“Huh?” asked Bebe.

“I mean,” said Louis, “are you sure it’s *Miss* Nogard? Not *Mrs.* Nogard?”

“I think,” said Bebe. “Why?”

Louis just shrugged.

25

Guilty

Some of the children were working in their workbooks. Others were reading in their readers. And still others were computing on the computer.

Miss Nogard looked from one to another. *Eenie . . . meenie . . . minie . . . Maurecia!* she thought.

Maurecia was stamping a stamp.

"Maurecia," said Miss Nogard. "Will you come here, please?"

Maurecia walked to the front of the room. "Yes?" she said cheerfully.

"Don't 'yes' me, young lady," said Miss Nogard. "You know what you did."

Maurecia looked back at her teacher. *What did I do?* she wondered.

Miss Nogard waited patiently. Everyone was guilty of something.

I didn't do anything, did I? thought Maurecia. *I've been good, I think. Unless she found out about that dictionary page I accidentally tore. No, she couldn't know about that! It happened before she even got here. And I don't think anybody saw me do it.*

"I didn't do anything," she said. *I probably should have told Mrs. Jewls about it,* she realized, *but it wasn't even my fault! I was looking up how to spell 'journey' for my journal, and the page just ripped all by itself.*

"It is one thing to do something wrong, Maurecia," said Miss Nogard. "But when you do, you should admit to it. We all make mistakes. But when you lie about it, you make matters much worse for yourself."

Maurecia nodded as she tried to figure out what to do. If Miss Nogard knew she tore the dictionary page, then of course she should admit to it. But there was no way Miss Nogard could know! It was impossible.

"I don't know what you mean," she said innocently. "I didn't do anything wrong." She smiled at her teacher.

Miss Nogard stared at her a long moment, then said, "Will you please bring me the dictionary?"

The smile dropped off Maurecia's face and crashed on the floor.

The dictionary lay on top of the bookcase. Maurecia numbly went after it. *How could she know?* she wondered. *It's impossible! Maybe she just wants to look up a word.*

She carried the heavy book back to Miss Nogard.

"Thank you, Maurecia," said Miss Nogard, flipping through the pages. "I need to look up 'journey.'"

Maurecia couldn't take it any longer. "I ripped it!" she cried out. "I tore the dictionary. I'm sorry. I don't even know how it happened. I was just turning the page, really! Maybe pages only have a certain amount of

turns in them. Like, nine hundred and ninety-nine. Then when you turn the page for the thousandth time, it will rip, no matter who turns it."

Miss Nogard sadly shook her head. "I am very disappointed in you," she said. "Not only did you vandalize the dictionary. But then you lied about it. I thought I could trust you, Maurecia. I guess I was wrong."

"I'm a horrible person," Maurecia agreed. "I'm sorry."

"Don't apologize to me," said Miss Nogard. "It's not my dictionary. It belongs to the class."

Maurecia had to stand in front of the class and tell them she was sorry. Then, since nobody would ever be able to use that page again, she had to read it aloud to the class.

She struggled through the difficult words like "journalism" and "judicious."

"Speak up," Miss Nogard had to keep reminding her. "And everyone needs to pay close attention because there will be a test on it when Maurecia is finished."

"Hey, that's not fair!" complained Jason. "We didn't rip the dictionary. Why should we be punished?"

"It's not punishment," said Miss Nogard. "It is for your own good. Since you can no longer use that page, you need to memorize it."

"Thanks a lot, Maurecia!" griped Jenny.

When Maurecia finished reading it. Miss Nogard made her turn the page over and read the back side of it too.

"But I only ripped the front," said Maurecia. "Not the back."

She finished, then returned to her seat, angry and upset. She wasn't angry at Miss Nogard. Miss Nogard was just being fair, she thought.

But there was only one way Miss Nogard could have known about the torn page, she realized. Somebody in the class must have seen her tear it and then tattled on her.

She looked around the room, from Deedee to Todd to Terrence to Joy. She didn't trust any of them.

One of her friends was a no-good-dirty-double-crossing-snake-in-the-grass!

26

Never Laugh At A Shoelace

“This is a shoelace,” said Mac.

Everybody laughed.

Mac was standing at the front of the room, holding his shoelace in his hand. He felt like a fool.

“What a fool!” said Allison.

It all started a minute earlier, when Miss Nogard asked, “Who has something to share for show-and-tell?”

But first you should know something about Mac.

Mac’s favorite subject in the whole world was show-and-tell. He loved it. Especially when he was the one doing the showing and telling.

He often looked through garbage cans on his way to school, in search of stuff to show and tell about. Once he found a real gushy love letter. It was covered with something that looked like peach slime. But that wasn’t what made it gushy. The gushy part was what was written in the letter. Mac read it to the class with lots of feeling.

So when Miss Nogard said, “Who has something to share for show-and-tell?” Mac reacted without thinking. His arm shot up like a rocket as he almost jumped out of his seat. “Ooooh! Ooooh!” he groaned.

Then he remembered something. *I didn’t bring anything for show-and-tell!*

Miss Nogard heard him. Before he could lower his hand, she called on him.

And that was how he ended up with his shoelace dangling from his hand like a dead worm.

“It came from my sneaker,” he said. He took off his sneaker and held it up too, next to his shoelace. “See, you stick the laces through the little holes, here. Then tie it in a bow. That keeps it from falling off your foot.”

“Duh!” said Dana.

“We know what a shoelace is,” said Paul.

“I’ve been tying my shoes since I was two years old,” said Joe.

Calvin and Bebe booed.

“Sit down,” said Jason. “You’re boring.”

The kids in Mrs. Jewls’s class never used to be so mean, but they’d been getting grumpier and grumpier ever since Miss Nogard took over.

“Put your shoe back on!” said Maurecia. “Your foot stinks.”

Mac felt terrible.

Miss Nogard smiled. “Go on, Mac,” she said. “We’re all very interested to hear what you have to say.”

He tried to think of some way to make a shoelace interesting. “Uh, shoelaces are real important,” he said. “There was once this guy. He was a real fast runner. His name was Howard. Howard Speed! He was the fastest runner in the world! But this was back before shoelaces were invented. And so, every time Howard raced, he ran right out of his shoes!”

Nobody seemed very impressed. But then Rondi asked, “Did it hurt his feet?”

Mac shrugged. “I guess,” he said.

“I once stubbed my toe on a rock,” said Stephen. “It hurt.”

“Yeah, and you didn’t run as fast as Howard Speed!” said Mac. “He ran so fast that if he kicked a rock, he would break his toe!”

“Did he have blisters?” asked Todd.

Mac smiled. “Man, he had the biggest blisters you ever saw in your whole life! Bleeding blisters!”

“Ooooh,” Joe and John said together.

“With pus oozing out!” said Mac.

“Oh, gross!” said Dana, wide-eyed.

Everyone was paying close attention to Mac now.

“Wherever Howard went,” said Mac, “he left a trail of bloody footprints.”

“Cool!” said Terrence.

“And so they had to invent something to keep Howard’s sneakers on his feet,” said Mac. “First they just tried nailing his shoes to his feet.”

“Yowza!” Bebe exclaimed.

“Why didn’t he just use Velcro?” asked Jason.

“Howard lived in Africa,” explained Mac. “Velcro trees only grow in Australia. So then they tried gluing his shoes to his feet. And that seemed to work. But then, whenever he took off his shoes, like to take a bath or something, he’d peel off a layer of skin.”

“Yuck-ola!” shrieked Allison.

“But finally Thomas Edison invented the shoelace, and Howard never ran out of his shoes again.”

“Did he win all his races after that?” asked John.

“Well,” said Mac, “the next race was for the championship of the whole world. Howard got off to a real fast start. It looked like he would win for sure. But shoelaces were still a new invention, and Howard wasn’t quite used to them yet. Right before he reached the finish line, his

shoelace came untied. He tripped over it and fell flat on his face. He broke his nose, lost all his teeth, and had two black eyes!”

“Wow,” said all three Erics together.

“So remember,” said Mac, as he held his shoelace high in the air. “Never laugh at a shoelace!”

Everyone applauded.

27

Way-High-Up Ball

Eric Fry, Eric Bacon, and Eric Ovens were playing way-high-up ball. They had made up the game themselves.

All you needed were two things—a pink rubber ball, about the size of a tennis ball, and a real tall school.

Eric Ovens threw the ball way high up. It bounced off the school, just above the third-story window.

“Three-pointer,” called Eric Bacon.

They shoved and elbowed each other out of the way as they waited for it to come down. At the last second, Eric Fry jumped and caught it.

He got three points. Eric Ovens also got three points since he was the thrower.

Eric Fry threw the ball way high up. It bounced off a window on the fifth floor.

“Five-pointer!” called Eric Ovens.

All three Erics jumped for it. It bounced off their fingertips and hit the ground.

The teacher on the fifth story stuck her head out the window. “Hey, what’s going on down there?” she shouted.

The three Erics looked away and whistled.

There’s one more thing about way-high-up ball I haven’t told you. You’re not allowed to play it. The Erics had already broken one window.

Eric Bacon looked up, surprised. “Are you talking to us?” he asked.

“Something just banged against my window,” said the teacher.

“Was it a bird?” asked Eric Ovens.

The teacher stared at the children a moment longer. Then she pulled her head inside.

Eric Fry threw the ball way high up. It was a six-pointer!

All three fought for position as they waited for it to come down, but at the last second, a hairy arm reached above them and caught it.

The arm belonged to Louis, the yard teacher.

“Can I play?” asked Louis. His mustache had grown back completely.

“Sure!” all three Erics said together.

“What do I have to do?” asked Louis.

“Just see how high up against the school you can throw it,” said Eric Fry.

Louis gripped the ball tightly in his hand. He reached way back, then let it fly.

“Wowww!” the three Erics said together as they watched the ball soar up in the air.

It hit up above the eighth-story window; then Louis caught his own rebound.

“Sixteen points!” said Eric Bacon.

“Throw it again, Louis,” said Eric Ovens.

Now that Louis was playing, lots of kids from all over the playground came to play too.

Louis threw the ball way high up. It hit above the eleventh story, then bounced back over everyone’s head.

There was a mad scramble for the ball. Bebe finally came up with it.

“Give it to Louis,” said Eric Ovens.

“No, let Bebe throw it,” said Louis, who always tried to be fair.

Bebe threw a two-pointer.

Jason caught the rebound. “You want to throw it, Louis?” he asked.

“No, you go ahead,” said Louis.

Jason threw a glopper.

A glopper is when the ball goes straight up in the air and comes down without touching the building.

Eric Bacon caught it. “Here, Louis,” he said.

“No, you throw it,” said Louis.

“But you can throw it so much higher,” said Eric B.

“We want to see how high you can throw it, Louis,” said Leslie.

“C’mon, Louis!” everyone urged.

Louis shook his head. ‘The game is for you kids, not for me.”

“Miss Nogard is watching,” said Bebe slyly.

Louis glanced at Miss Nogard, who was standing just outside the front door. “Give me the ball,” he said.

The kids cheered.

Louis reached way down, almost to the ground, then hurled it up with all his might.

The ball reached the fifteenth floor, halfway up the school!

“Wow!” everyone said together.

“I got it,” called Terrence as he circled under the ball, waiting for it to come down. His knees wobbled.

The ball bounced off his face. “Cool,” he said as blood flowed out of his nose.

“That was a world’s record, Louis!” exclaimed Eric Ovens.

Louis smiled proudly. He turned to look at Miss Nogard, but she had already gone inside.

“You like Miss Nogard, don’t you?” asked Bebe.

“She seems like a nice person,” said Louis.

“She’s pretty too,” said Eric Bacon as he nudged Louis in the side.

“Well, she is kind of cute,” Louis admitted.

“Oooooh,” said Joy.

“But do you *love* her?” asked Jenny.

Everyone giggled. Louis’s red face got even redder.

“You should ask her out on a date,” said Eric Fry.

“No, I don’t think that’s a very good idea,” said Louis.

“Why not?” asked Eric Ovens. “I think you two would make a real cute couple.”

“Bring her flowers,” said Dana.

“Buy her candy,” said Maurecia.

“Tell her she’s got eyes like the moon,” said Bebe.

“Eyes like the moon?” asked Louis.

“Girls love it when you tell them that,” said Bebe.

“Forget that gushy stuff,” said Eric Bacon. “Just walk right up to her and say, ‘Hey, baby! How about a date?’”

“Just like that?” asked Louis.

“This is what you do,” said Terrence. “You take her to a real scary movie. And then at the scary part, you put your arm around her.”

“Ooooh,” said Dana and Jenny.

“No, take her dancing,” said Myron. “And hold her real close.”

“Oooooh,” said the three Erics.

Louis laughed. “You kids are crazy,” he said.

“You’re scared of her, aren’t you?” asked Eric Bacon.

“You shouldn’t be scared,” said Eric Ovens. “You’re bigger and stronger and faster than anyone on the playground.”

“And you’ve got the best mustache too,” said Eric Fry.

“I’m not afraid of her,” Louis tried to explain. “It’s just—” He looked up at the very tall school. “Miss Nogard is way-high-up there, and I’m way-down-low here. You’ll understand someday when you’re older.”

He picked up the ball and threw it way high up. It hit somewhere between the eighteenth and twentieth story.

And never came down.
There was no nineteenth story.

28

Flowers for a Very Special Person

Of course Miss Nogard knew all about Louis. The children's brains were buzzing about him.

Louis likes Miss Nogard, thought Stephen.

Louis is in love with Miss Nogard, thought Todd.

Louis wants to marry Miss Nogard, thought Sharie.

But even if she couldn't listen to their brains, she would have found out anyway. "Louis, the yard teacher, is madly in love with you," said Jenny.

"Oh, really?" said Miss Nogard.

"He dreams about you every night," said Calvin.

"He thinks your eyes are like the moon," said Bebe.

Miss Nogard smiled.

"Do you like him?" asked Jenny.

"He's kind of cute," said Miss Nogard.

"Ooooh," Bebe and Calvin said together.

"What about his mustache?" asked Jenny. "Do you like his mustache?"

Miss Nogard thought a moment. "It would probably tickle if he kissed me."

The children gasped as their mouths fell open.

They returned to their desks and told everyone around them what Miss Nogard said.

Miss Nogard smiled. She wondered just how she'd break Louis's heart.

Ever since Xavier broke her heart, she'd become an expert at breaking other people's. She listened to men's brains and knew just what to say to make them fall in love with her.

And then she knew just the right thing to say, at just the right moment, to shatter their hearts into a million pieces. Even the biggest and strongest man would cry like a baby.

She was incapable of love. Her heart was clogged with bitterness and hate. And besides, she knew no one would ever love someone with three ears.

For just a second she felt a pang of sadness. Because she really did think Louis was kind of cute. Like a puppy dog.

She could almost feel the tickle of his mustache.

"Miss Nogard thinks you're cute," Jenny told Louis at recess.

"She's hot for you, Louis!" said Mac.

"She wants to kiss you!" said Bebe.

"C'mon, let's play kickball," said Louis.

They played kickball, but it was weird. Louis, who was probably the best kickball player ever, did terribly. He tripped over the ball when he tried to kick it. And when Terrence kicked a pop-up, Louis tried to catch it, but the ball bounced off his head.

"What's wrong with Louis?" asked Ron. "Is he sick or something?"

"Yes," said Jenny. "He's got a real bad disease. And it's spelled L-O-V-E."

The next morning Louis came to school with a bunch of flowers in his hand.

Jenny saw him. "Are those for Miss Nogard?" she asked.

"Oh, I don't know," said Louis. "I passed a field of wildflowers on the way to school. I thought I might give them to someone special." He winked at her.

He headed toward the school building. Jenny followed.

"*Oooh*, flowers!" said Bebe.

"Are you going to give them to Miss Nogard?" asked Calvin.

"Oh, I don't know," said Louis. "I think she might have a pretty face, I mean vase."

Calvin and Bebe followed along with Jenny.

Louis entered the building.

Miss Nogard was in the office. She was getting her mail from her box. Her back was to him.

Louis froze.

"Go on, Louis," urged Jenny.

But Louis just stood there. The flowers rattled in his shaky hand, and several petals fell to the floor.

Mr. Kidswatter came out of his office. "Good morning, Louis," he said. "What have you got there?"

"Uh, these are for you," said Louis. He thrust the flowers into Mr. Kidswatter's hand.

"They're lovely!" said Mr. Kidswatter.

Miss Nogard turned around. "Those are very pretty, Mr. Kidswatter," she said, then headed up the stairs.

Louis watched her go.

"No one's ever brought me flowers before," said Mr. Kidswatter. "You may not believe this, Louis, but I don't have many friends." He put his

hand on Louis's shoulder. "You're like a son to me," he said.

"And you're a maggot-infested string bean," muttered Louis.

"What?" asked Mr. K.

"I said, you're a magnificent human being."

29

Stupid

“Did anyone have any trouble with the homework?” asked Miss Nogard.

They all shook their heads.

Ron shook his head too. *Homework?* he thought. *What homework?*

“Good,” said Miss Nogard. “Well, in that case, there won’t be any homework tonight.”

Everyone cheered.

"Let's just quickly go over the answers," she said. "Ron, what was your answer to question one?"

Ron's stomach flipped over. He fumbled with his notebook. "Uh, just a second," he said.

"That's okay, we'll wait," said Miss Nogard.

Ron flipped through the pages. "What question are we on?" he asked.

"Question one," said Miss Nogard.

"Um, I couldn't get that one," said Ron.

"Oh," said Miss Nogard. "Well, that's okay, Ron. As long as you tried. Who knows the answer to question one?"

A handful of hands went up in the air.

Seven lima beans, thought Jason.

Seven lima beans, thought Rondi.

Six cucumbers, thought Deedee.

Seven lima beans, thought Stephen.

Miss Nogard called on Deedee.

"Six cucumbers," Deedee said proudly.

"No, I'm sorry," said Miss Nogard. "The answer was seven lima beans."

Ooh, I had that! thought Jason.

She should have called on me! thought Rondi.

Deedee is stupid, thought Stephen.

"Okay, question two," said Miss Nogard. "Ron, did you get that one?"

Ron squirmed in his seat. He flipped through his papers. "What question are we on?" he asked.

"Question two," said Miss Nogard.

"Uh, I couldn't get that one either," said Ron.

Miss Nogard looked at him a moment. "Okay, who knows the answer to question two?"

Abraham Lincoln's hat, thought Todd.

Abraham Lincoln's hat, thought Joy.

Abraham Lincoln's hat, thought Bebe.

George Washington's left shoe, thought Calvin.

"Yes, Calvin," said Miss Nogard.

"George Washington's left shoe!" said Calvin.

“No, I’m sorry,” said Miss Nogard. “The answer was Abraham Lincoln’s hat.”

I knew it! thought Todd.

Calvin’s stupid, thought Joy.

“Ron, did you get the answer to number three?” asked Miss Nogard.

Ron shook his sorry little head. He wished he had just told her the truth, but now it was too late.

“Anyone?” asked Miss Nogard.

Chairs and bears, thought Benjamin.

Coats and goats, thought D. J.

Chairs and bears, thought Mac.

Chairs and bears, thought Deedee.

Miss Nogard called on D. J.

“Coats and goats?” he said hopefully.

“No, chairs and bears,” said Miss Nogard.

What an idiot! thought Benjamin.

“Question four,” said Miss Nogard. “Ron?”

. . . And so it went. Miss Nogard went through the entire homework assignment, and nobody gave a correct answer.

“I’m very disappointed,” she said when they were finished. “You obviously didn’t understand it. So I’m afraid I’m going to have to assign homework tonight after all.”

Everyone groaned.

“I don’t like it any better than you do,” said Miss Nogard. “But it’s for your own good.”

She assigned three pages of homework, plus they had to do yesterday’s homework over again as well.

But nobody blamed Miss Nogard. They liked her! She didn’t even want to give homework.

They blamed each other.

It’s *not fair!* thought Benjamin. *I only missed one problem. But I have to do extra homework because everyone else is so stupid!*

It was the same all around the room. Nobody missed more than two problems. Everyone thought everyone else was stupid!

Miss Nogard smiled as she listened to their thoughts.

I hate Joe! thought John.

I hate Calvin! thought Bebe.

I hate Joy! thought Maurecia.
I hate Allison! thought Rondi.
And everyone hated Ron.

30

The Little Stranger

Wayside School was no fun anymore.

“Hey, out of my way, buster!” said Deedee as she pushed past Ron on her way to her seat.

“Hey, keep your hairy paws to yourself!” said Ron.

Nobody had any friends. Everybody hated everybody—except Miss Nogard. They all liked her.

But then a miracle happened.

A new kid came to school.

The new kid couldn’t talk. She had no teeth. She was almost bald.

She was beautiful.

Her name was Mavis Jewls. She was only four days old.

She really was a new kid.

Mrs. Jewls carried her into the classroom.

And when the baby came through the door, all the hate flew out the window.

Louis came in behind them carrying a bassinet, a diaper bag, an assortment of toys, and a baby bottle.

“It’s Mrs. Jewls and her baby!” Todd exclaimed.

Louis set the bassinet on Todd’s desk. Mrs. Jewls gently laid her baby down in it, on soft yellow blankets.

Everyone crowded around the little stranger.

“Look at her totally tiny toes!” Bebe squealed. “Aren’t those the cutest things you’ve ever seen in your whole life?”

“Check out her nose!” said Myron.

“Oh, she’s so beautiful, Mrs. Jewls,” said Joy. “Can I touch her?”

“Sure,” said Mrs. Jewls.

They took turns touching the baby.

“Goo-goo, goo-goo,” said Mac as he gently shook Mavis’s little hand.

“Iggle wiggle poo poo,” said Allison, tapping her on the nose.

“Iggle wiggle poo poo poo,” said Rondi, tickling her foot.

“Yibble bibble,” said Todd.

“Ooh goo boo boo,” cooed Joe.

“She’s never going to learn to talk around you kids,” said Mrs. Jewls with a laugh.

Dana was so happy she cried. She hugged Mrs. Jewls.

They all took turns hugging Mrs. Jewls.

Of course, there was one person who wasn't happy. "May I hold her, Mrs. Jewls?" Miss Nogard asked sweetly.

Mrs. Jewls looked at the substitute teacher.

"It's okay," said Allison. "Miss Nogard's a real nice teacher."

"Sure, go ahead," said Mrs. Jewls. "I'm sorry for interrupting your class like this."

"Oh, that's quite all right," said Miss Nogard, picking up Mrs. Jewls's baby. "She's just adorable."

The window by Sharie's desk was wide open. *That's kind of dangerous*, Miss Nogard realized. *Somebody might accidentally drop something out the window.*

She slowly moved toward it as she swayed with the baby. "I've heard so much about you, Mrs. Jewls," she said. "The children have missed you."

"I've missed them too," said Mrs. Jewls.

There was a rubber-band ball on the floor next to Sharie's desk. Sharie had been making it, although it wasn't nearly as big as the one Mr. Kidswatter had been making.

If I tripped over that rubber-band ball, something awful might happen, thought Miss Nogard.

She was just about to step on it when suddenly she became very curious about the kind of thoughts babies had. She had never listened to a baby's brain before.

Miss Nogard held Mavis close to her heart and listened. . . .

She gasped. Her face turned white, and her legs wobbled beneath her. As she tried to get her balance, she stepped on the rubber-band ball and fell toward the open window.

Louis jumped over Sharie's desk and grabbed her just in time.

Mrs. Jewls hurried over.

Miss Nogard tenderly handed Mrs. Jewls her baby. Then she fainted in Louis's arms.

It is impossible to describe, in words, exactly what Miss Nogard heard when she listened to Mavis's brain.

Babies don't think in words.

Miss Nogard heard pure love. And trust. And faith. With no words to get in the way.

It was a love so strong that it dissolved away all the bitterness that had been caked around her heart.

She opened her eyes.

“Are you all right Miss Nogard?” asked Stephen.

All the children were very worried about her.

Miss Nogard smiled at Louis, who was still holding her. “I’m fine,” she said, then took a couple of steps to steady herself. “In fact, I think I’m better than I’ve been in a long time.” She laughed, then hugged Stephen.

“You should feel very proud of your class,” she told Mrs. Jewls. “They are bright, well behaved, and just a pleasure to teach.”

“We are?” asked Maurecia.

Miss Nogard fluffed Maurecia’s hair. “Yes, you are,” she said.

Maurecia smiled up at her.

“I know,” said Mrs. Jewls. “As I told my obstetrician—”

“Your what?” asked Joy.

“Obstetrician,” said Mrs. Jewls. “That’s the doctor who helped me have my baby. Then, once a baby is born, she gets a new doctor. That doctor is called a pediatrician. That’s different from a podiatrist, who is a doctor who takes care of people’s feet. There are many different kinds of doctors. There’s also a—”

Todd raised his hand. “Mrs. Jewls, you’re starting to get a little boring,” he said.

Mrs. Jewls made Todd write his name on the blackboard under the word DISCIPLINE.

“Hey, Louis!” shouted Mac. “Ask Miss Nogard out on a date!”

Everyone looked at Louis.

Miss Nogard looked at him too.

“Do it, Louis!” said Leslie.

“I really would like to get to know you better, Miss Nogard,” he said.

“Ooooh,” said Paul and Leslie.

“Way to go, Louis!” cheered D. J.

“Call me Wendy,” said Wendy Nogard.

“Ooooh,” said Bebe and Calvin.

“Okay, Wendy,” said Louis. “And you can call me Louis.”

“I already do,” said Wendy. She smiled at him.

He smiled back. “So what do you say?” he asked. “Would you like to go out sometime?”

Miss Nogard hesitated.

“Say yes, Miss Nogard!” urged Jenny.

Miss Nogard took a deep breath. “I like you, Louis,” she said. “But I think there is something you should know about me first.”

She bent over and parted the hair on top of her head.

Everyone crowded around as they tried to get a good look.

“It’s an ear!” shouted Jason.

“Yes, it is an ear,” said Miss Nogard.

“Cool!” said Terrence.

“Can I touch it?” asked Dana.

Everyone took turns touching her ear.

The one on top of her head, I mean.

“So, Louis, are you sure you still want to go out with me?” she asked.

Louis held her hands in his. “I like you a lot,” he said. “It doesn’t matter how many ears you have.” He paused for a second. “How many ears do you have?”

“Just three,” she assured him.

“I think your ears are beautiful,” said Louis. “I think your nose and eyebrows are beautiful.”

Miss Nogard didn’t have to read Louis’s mind to know he was telling the truth. She could see it in his eyes.

His eyes were like the moon.

She kissed him. His mustache tickled.

Everybody oooohed.

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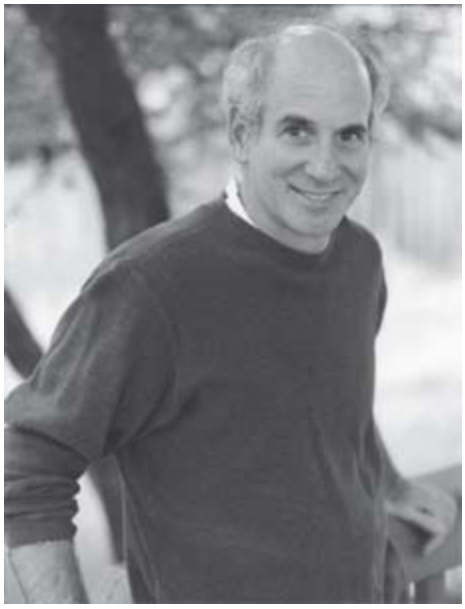

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LOUIS SACHAR is the Newbery Award and National Book Award–winning author of *Holes*, the Wayside School series, and many other books for children and young adults. He was born in East Meadow, New York, and now lives in Texas with his family.

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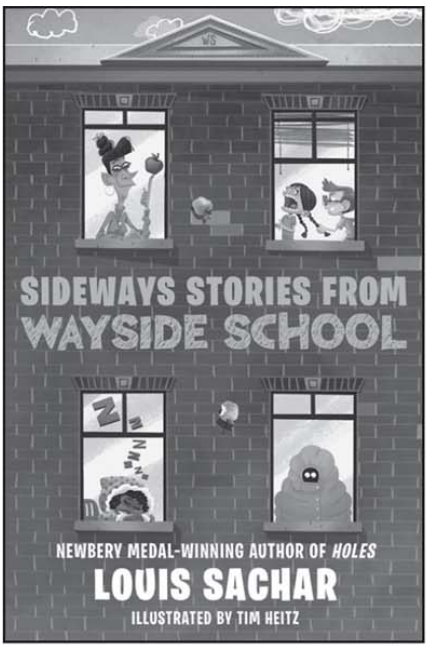

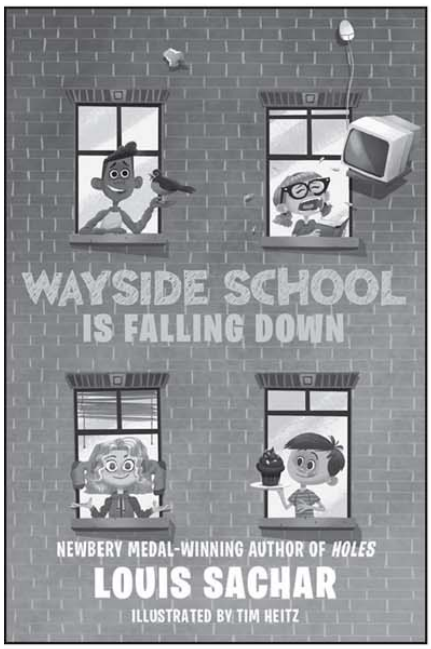

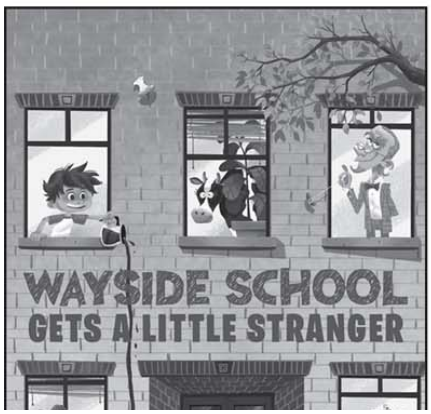

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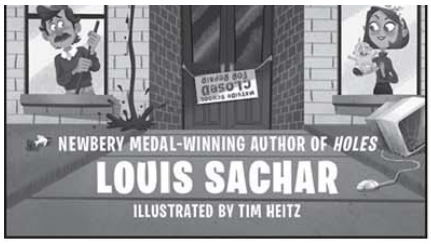

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